

krzysztof
kieślowski
DEKALOG
and other
television
works

Arrow Academy
presents

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kieślowski
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Stanley Kubrick in 1980

Introduction

This was originally published as the foreword to Faber & Faber's edition of the *Dekalog* screenplays. It was the only foreword that Kubrick ever wrote for a book.

I am always reluctant to single out some particular feature of the work of a major filmmaker because it tends inevitably to simplify and reduce the work. But in this book of screenplays by Krzysztof Kieślowski and his co-author, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, it should not be out of place to observe that they have the very rare ability to *dramatise* their ideas rather than just talking about them. By making their points through the dramatic action of the story they gain the added power of allowing the audience to *discover* what's really going on rather than being told. They do this with such dazzling skill, you never see the ideas coming and don't realise until much later how profoundly they have reached your heart.

Stanley Kubrick

January 1991



Krzysztof Kieślowski in Montmartre Cemetery, Paris, 1990

The Ten Commandments

*D*ekalog was inspired by the Ten Commandments that Moses brought down from the mountain engraved on tablets of stone. However, despite various attempts at imposing particular commandments on particular *Dekalog* episodes, there are no explicit references to this in the films themselves, either in onscreen text or through dialogue. Sometimes the connection is obvious (*Dekalog, Five* is a brutally blunt presentation of “Thou shalt not kill”, while *Dekalog, One* is equally clearly “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”, with Krzysztof and Paweł’s home computer a proscribed “other god”), but at other times the connection is more elliptical: *Dekalog, Six*, for instance, is hardly an admonishment against adultery, which would seem to be a key theme of *Dekalog, Three* – although that episode is also clearly relevant to honouring the importance of holy days.

But, here, for reference, are the original commandments, as found in the King James Bible, Deuteronomy chapter 5, verses one to seventeen:

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

One

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Two

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Three

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Four

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Five

Thou shalt not kill.

Six

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Seven

Thou shalt not steal.

Eight

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Nine

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.

Ten

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. ●



Krzysztof Kieślowski at the National Film Theatre, London, 1990

Before *Dekalog*

by Father Marek Lis

Krzysztof Kieślowski (born 27 June 1941, died 13 March 1996), after graduating from the famous State Theatrical and Film College in Łódź, began his film career at the end of the 1960s as a documentary film-maker. Although after a few years he also started to direct fiction films (the first was a short film, *Pedestrian Subway*, 1973; then *Personnel*, 1975; *The Scar*, 1976; *The Calm*, 1976; *Camera Buff*, 1979; *Blind Chance*, 1981), he continued to make documentaries until the end of the 1970s.

Both feature films and documentaries allowed Kieślowski, a sensitive and indifferent observer of everyday life, to explore “the undescribed world”, as Adam Zagajewski and Julian Kornhauser called the silence of literature regarding many aspects of early 1970s Polish reality. In his films, Kieślowski shows everyday life – grey and full of contrasts (*From the City of Łódź*, 1969), sometimes inhumanly bureaucratised, turning a man into a number in the file (*Refrain*, 1972). In the documentaries made in this period he presented the struggle to stay together (*First Love*, 1974) or the almost heroic work of doctors (*Hospital*, 1975). His method has been described as “a world in a drop of water”: looking at a detail and an individual (*Bricklayer*, 1973; *Talking Heads*, 1980), in which one could see the complete picture, allowed him to tell the stories about Polish society, about many people’s dreams and the obstacles on their path to make them come true (*Seven Women of Different Ages*, 1978). The director rarely unmasked people’s attitude unmercifully (*A Night Watchman’s Point of View*, 1977), as a rule avoiding making films of a journalistic and casual character. However, in his feature films Kieślowski refers to then current events a few times, as happens in *Short*

Working Day (1981), based on the reportage of Hanna Krall, 'View from a First-Floor Window', featuring a secretary of the Voivodeship Committee of the Polish Communist Party during the workers' strikes in Radom in June 1976, as well as in *Blind Chance* (1981), made during the Solidarity period.

Witek, the main character in *Blind Chance*, was born in Poznań during the tragic events of the Poznań uprising. He was 12 when he bade farewell to his Jewish friend who was moving "only to Denmark", and when he was a medical student, his father died and Witek, going through a crisis, asks for one year's leave. From that moment the film shows three possible scenarios, beginning with Witek running frenziedly to catch the train and finishing at the Warsaw airport from where he travels to Paris. In the first scenario, Witek pulls himself aboard the train, meets Werner, an old communist, and becomes a young party activist discovering the system's dark sides. In the second scenario, Witek is detained by a railway guard, sentenced to unpaid community service, meets young opposition members and gets politically engaged in underground activities as well as discovering faith and getting baptised. The third scenario shows him choosing a quiet life: Witek meets his former love, gets married, resumes his medical studies, does not get involved in politics, and finally dies in a plane crash. Although *Blind Chance* recalls the moments from then-recent Polish history (the 'Poznań June' of March 1968, strikes in 1976 and 1980) in this film Kieślowski begins to ask metaphysical questions which he explores later in *Dekalog*, *The Double Life of Veronique* and in the *Three Colours* trilogy (which is present also in films made by other directors such as *Sliding Doors*, *Run Lola Run* and *Mr. Nobody*).

Kieślowski edited *Blind Chance* and *Short Working Day* in the winter of 1981, just before martial law was imposed. Both films were suppressed by the censorship authorities and the director, very prolific till that time (he made six feature-length films between 1975 and 1981), stopped working at all after 13 December 1981. He mentioned in *Kieślowski on Kieślowski* that he was thinking about looking for another job; he even tried to be a taxi driver: "You couldn't work in my profession during martial law, and nobody counted on being able to work. But after some time, of course, we did start trying to do something." He started to

collaborate with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, a lawyer who defended opposition activists. Kieślowski obtained permission to make a documentary showing court proceedings, common and military, during martial law so he could film the handing-down of sentences in political cases and show the faces of the judges passing them. Piesiewicz, connected with the opposition movement, at first did not trust Kieślowski, but finally agreed to work with him. Eventually the film was not made because the judges, aware of being recorded, either passed deferred sentences or even did not pass sentences at all.

The experience gained in the courtrooms inspired Kieślowski to make a film about a recently deceased lawyer and the family he left behind, as well as about his client, a striking worker that he was defending. In *No End* (1984), Kieślowski, who until then had stuck to realism as it resulted from his documentary experience, first introduces a metaphysical character – the ghost of the dead lawyer, Antoni Zyro. He accompanies his wife Urszula, who can somehow feel his presence, and influences real life from the beyond. In *The Calm* the director searched for an answer to the question of how to show the invisible on a screen, which is a medium of visibility: the character played by Jerzy Stuhr could not see galloping horses on the screen of a TV set that he fixed, although they are clearly visible to viewers. Zyro (Jerzy Radziwiłowicz) defended a worker involved in a strike (Artur Barciś): now his defence is continued by a pragmatic attorney, Labrador, who wants to win the worker's case, since staying faithful to his principles and honour is the most important question. In this depressing film about martial law and lack of hope, Zyro appears like a guardian angel: he writes a question mark next to Labrador's name in his notebook (it was not there before), the car driven by Urszula stops mysteriously on the road and a passing car crashes into a bus soon afterwards. Urszula misses her late husband so much that she decides to commit suicide – which is not the end: the last scene introduces a metaphysical motif of the spiritual world, similar to the end of *Spiral* (1978) by Krzysztof Zanussi – a park in which Antoni and Urszula meet.

No End was the first Kieślowski film to which Krzysztof Piesiewicz co-wrote a screenplay, and to which Zbigniew Preisner composed the score. The director, the lawyer and the composer worked together on



Krzysztof Kieślowski filming *Dekalog*, Five. Photo by Romuald Pierkowski

sixteen films, including *A Short Film About Killing*, *A Short Film About Love*, *Dekalog*, *The Double Life of Véronique*, *Three Colours*. A closer look at Kieślowski's work reveals that the themes present in one film ripen and transform, and then, once developed, return in later films; it refers to fictional situations and to music (a funereal motif from *No End* reappears in *Three Colours: Blue*; the compositions by Van den Budenmayer, a fictitious composer created for *Dekalog*, *Nine* are quoted in *The Double Life of Véronique*). In the ghost of Antek from *No End*, one can perceive a prototype of the mysterious character played by Artur Barciś in *Dekalog*, maybe referring also to *Wings of Desire* (1987) made by German director Wim Wenders, telling the story of two anthropomorphic angels, Amiel and Cassiel who, unseen by ordinary people, observe their lives and hear their thoughts.

Dekalog was conceived by Piesiewicz ("A terrible idea, of course" – as the director remarked in *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*), and Kieślowski initially did not want to make it. It resulted from his distancing himself from politics and was based on his experience as a documentary film maker who pays attention to details (it is enough to stop in front of the tenant house in Noakowski Street, the one appearing in *Dekalog*, *Eight*, with a small chapel in the courtyard, to notice a plaque commemorating the creation of the Grey Ranks in this place) and on the themes that were already explored in the earlier film, such as metaphysical problems, longing for breaking free from everyday struggle and selfishness as well as from life that slips through one's fingers. *Dekalog* was going to ask an essential question: what are we living for?

The decision to start making *Dekalog* was surprising for another reason: in earlier Kieślowski films religious themes, direct or indirect, were hardly present, and the director was not very close to the Church. The distance got even greater after the premiere of *No End*, a film that was received terribly by the authorities (since it reminded them of the Solidarity movement) and the opposition (since it offered no hope). Moreover, Kieślowski felt rejected by Roman Catholics when *Przegląd Powszechny* published a review trashing the film, written by a non-believing critic whom this Jesuit magazine invited to write reviews. Krzysztof Zanussi recalls that the Church was very interested in Kieślowski, but after this incident the director said: "Before I could have knocked, they already exiled me..."

Perhaps it happened because Kieślowski objected to having religious inspirations or intentions attributed to him. *Dekalog* ostensibly seems to be a film work about God. Paradoxically, it results from the (non-) religious attitude of the director and the purposeful intentions of both scriptwriters. Co-author Krzysztof Piesiewicz recalled their mutual decision: “We agreed that if while writing *Dekalog* we got close to mystery, to something that I could call the inexplicability of certain behaviour and phenomena – we would not allow ourselves to cross a certain line. Because sacrum is unknowable. The history of cinema confirms that authors, who wanted to show sacrum by any means in a straight way, often achieved a cheap effect.”

In *Dekalog*, made under communism, the starting points are the commandments written in the Old Testament, a religious text. The references to religiousness, in its institutionalised form (photographs of Pope John Paul II are shown twice, amongst similar details) and in the form of personal experience are noticeable, clearly yet non-intrusive. Cinema historian Marek Haltof described this anomaly as “ten television films relating to the Biblical Ten Commandments in a communist-bloc country by a director who considered himself agnostic.”

Dekalog opened a new chapter in Kieślowski’s work, marked by his resignation from the struggle with politics that characterised his earlier documentary and feature films (e.g. *The Calm*, *Personnel*, *Short Working Day*). Numerous symbols appear in the ten films with unprecedented intensity: meaningful character names, ice, chess, a breaking inkpot, a bee, a ladder, the application of colour, apparently incidental figures, references to other art works (films, paintings, literature), and references to biblical texts. Although the film was intended to be a humanistic interpretation of the Ten Commandments, Kieślowski’s answer to the question “What, in essence, is right and what is wrong? What is a lie and what is truth? What is honesty and what is dishonesty?” calls for existence of “an absolute point of reference” – that is God.

Finally, on 10 December 1989 the first part of *Dekalog* premiered on Polish television. The ten-film cycle, apparently unspectacular, posed more ethical than religious questions to the viewer, more about man than God.

In an article published in the monthly magazine *Kino* in December 2003, Krzysztof Kornacki pointed at the paradoxical situation in which the film “made with an intention to neutralise biblical meanings tells more about the meaning of the biblical Decalogue than many declarative messages”, since “a horizontal ‘vector of love’ runs through the whole of *Dekalog* that makes Kieślowski’s (and Piesiewicz’s) cycle seem to be a profound reading of the biblical Decalogue in which its spirit, essence is more important than its letter”. An Orthodox theologian, Michał Klinger stated clearly that in *Dekalog* “we deal with the revival of religious art. Kieślowski’s art is religious,” as it results from its universism. The work of an artist asking important questions regarding man and God cannot be unambiguously assessed. ●

Father Marek Lis is a specialist in religion and the cinema, a discipline that was once officially prohibited in his native Poland. He chairs the Department of Homiletics, Media and Communications at Opole University, and has written extensively about Krzysztof Kieślowski and Krzysztof Zanussi. His publications include the monograph *Cinematic Transformations of the Gospel* (2013).



Krzysztof Kieślowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 1989. Photo by Piotr Jaxa

Dekalog

“Someone should
make a film about the
Ten Commandments”

by Father Marek Lis

The idea was originated by Krzysztof Piesiewicz, a lawyer who already worked with Kieślowski as the co-author of the screenplay of *No End* (1984): “Someone should make a film about the Ten Commandments. You should do it.” Kieślowski says in his autobiography, *Kieślowski on Kieślowski* (edited by Danusia Stok), that initially he opposed this idea, but then realised that in the face of chaos and disorder, tension and feelings of hopelessness it is necessary to remind people of questions that should be fundamental. The director, having accepted Piesiewicz’s concept, planned to make the films that were not meant to illustrate the commandments, but use them only as an inspiration. “*Dekalog* is an attempt to narrate ten stories about ten or twenty individuals, who – caught in a struggle precisely because of these and not other circumstances, circumstances which are fictitious but which could occur in everyday life – suddenly realise that they are going round and round in circles.”

The concept of *Dekalog* ripened, took artistic and cinematographic

shape, tried to break through the zone of indifference of the industry and various difficulties connected, amongst others, with financing the project. Krzysztof Zanussi, the director of the Tor Film Unit that produced *Dekalog* recalled 25 years later that the project was not a success at the beginning: nobody wanted these films. The prospect of presenting a universal theme convinced Telewizja Polska, but when eight episodes were filmed it turned out that the money had run out and there was nothing left to finance the remaining episodes. The TV producer asked: "Don't you exaggerate? Do you really have to make ten parts? Maybe eight will be enough." The production was saved quite accidentally by a producer from Berlin who was not very interested in the films' theme but he took a risk and decided to invest his money. Spending a relatively small sum on *Dekalog* turned out to be his best investment ever.

At first, Kieślowski planned to hand over the direction of ten films (to which screenplays had been written by Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, based on their own experiences) to ten young directors, but eventually he directed them himself, although the cameramen were different. The characters of the different parts of the cycle are people all living in a Warsaw housing estate in the late 1980s, sometimes passing each other in a doorway, meeting in the lift or in the hall, looking at each other out of the windows. Although each of the almost one-hour films is a separate and complete unit, they are nonetheless linked: most noticeably by a silent man played by Artur Barciś. The main characters from certain parts make brief appearances in other parts – Krzysztof from the first part also turns up in the third, the married couple from the second part reappears in the fifth and the eighth, the taxi driver from the fifth is also in the fourth. In the tenth part, Tomek from part six turns up, meeting Roman from *Dekalog, Nine*, and the stamp collector from the final part is also in the eighth. Two of the *Dekalog* episodes – the fifth and the sixth – were released in expanded versions as feature films (*A Short Film About Killing* and *A Short Film About Love*) that significantly differ from their television counterparts. The reading of the published *Dekalog* screenplays is also inspiring: there are plots not included in the final versions of the films, different endings; differing sequences of events. Actors, such as Maja Komorowska (who played the religious aunt in the first film) contributed their sensibility to the cycle. Autobiographical elements of the director can also be found: Kieślowski's own spiritual

and religious doubts and searching are expressed by Krzysztof in the first film and Zofia in the eighth.

It is worth mentioning that *Dekalog* is not a series (meaning a collection of dramatic episodes featuring a closed group of characters) but a cycle, which – as Adam Garbicz explains in the *Encyclopaedia of Cinema* – does not form a continuous fictional story but consists of films devoted to different themes. Thus, *Dekalog* can be watched not only from the first part to the last, but also in randomly chosen sequence, discovering well-thought-through relationships between the elements of the cycle.

Films about the commandments?

Annette Insdorf recalled a situation that took place at the Venice Film Festival in Venice in 1989, where *Dekalog* was screened out of competition as a "special event". The director was "deluged by critics' questions about the specific commandment to which each episode was linked. After a few days, the press office published a list of the Ten Commandments.

The titles of all parts being the numbers (*Dekalog, One; Dekalog, Two*, etc.) do not make their understanding easier: who remembers the wording of the third or the eighth commandments? Moreover, the division of the unnumbered verses of Exodus is different in the Roman Catholic and Lutheran tradition, and different in the Orthodox and Reformed Christian Churches, where the separated second commandment contains a prohibition of images and idolatry (being in fact an explanation of the first commandment), and the prohibition not to covet "thy neighbour's wife" nor "anything that is his" was united in the tenth commandment. Kieślowski fulfils with the content the wordings known from the Catholic catechism: 1. I am the Lord thy God... thou shalt not have other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. 2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. 3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 4. Honour thy father and thy mother. 5. Thou shalt not kill. 6. Thou shalt not commit adultery. 7. Thou shalt not steal. 8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. 9.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife. 10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.

But even if one knows the commandments it does not make understanding of individual films any easier. What is the subject of idolatry in *Dekalog, One*? A computer, trust in the unlimited capability of a device and the human mind? Or maybe the issue is the lack of faith in God? What is taking the name of God in the second film? The references to the next two commandments are clearer, however in *Dekalog, Five* the director poses a then-provocative thesis that the death penalty equates to murder. In the sixth film the spied-on woman constantly breaks the Biblical prohibition, and Tomek, who watches her, eventually allows her to find the meaning of love. The seventh film moves the emphasis from "stealing" to "abduction", but there are more characters that hurt each other. A false witness borne during the war, shown in *Dekalog, Eight*, leads to tragedies lasting decades that could have been fixed with the words of truth and forgiveness. In the ninth film, coveting is paradoxical and precises the understanding of the adequate commandment. The last part is ironic: a deceased father left a valuable stamp collection that infected his sons with covetousness. None of the ten films refers only to one titular commandment: breaking one commandment leads to breaking others.

A key to *Dekalog*?

Soon after the premiere of *Dekalog*, Tadeusz Sobolewski wrote that the seemingly small role of a silent man (played by Artur Barciś) is exceptionally important: "To understand him is to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the whole of *Dekalog*." A slim, fair-haired "young man" (as he is described in the screenplays) impersonates a different figure in every film: he seems to be a homeless man, an orderly, a tram driver, an oarsman, a worker and a painter, a wandering traveller, a man with crutches, a student, a lost biker. He briefly appears at crucial moments of the stories; he observes the characters, sometimes unnoticed by them. He is not in the tenth part, or maybe we simply cannot see him? That intriguing figure whose gaze straight into the viewers' eyes opens

the cycle was interpreted in many different ways. He was perceived, amongst others, as a personification of inevitable fate, conscience, the Angel of Death portending misfortune or Destiny, and even God himself. The director, in *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, does not facilitate an understanding of that character: "There's this guy who wanders around in all the films. I don't know who he is; just a guy who comes and watches. He watches us, our lives. He's not very pleased with us. He comes, watches and walks on." However, in the interview for *Kino* magazine after the premiere, Artur Barciś admitted: "I know what is going to happen soon. I know that because I am not human."

Joseph G. Kickasola named this linking character Theophanes, meaning "Appearances of God". Theophanes is a reference to *Andrei Rublev* by Andrei Tarkovsky (1966), in which a character bearing the same name moves like a spirit and appears to know more than most other mortals. Theophanes is not God but "he references him like an icon, materially bearing his presence and eternal gaze" and has some of God's traits: mysterious knowledge and omnipresence.

"The look of God" is performed in the first episode through tears, perhaps relating to the human condition; in *Dekalog, Two*, after the diagnosis (the revealed progression of the cancer), a miracle occurs that is confirmed by silent presence of Theophanes; he – and God at the same time – sees the transformation of Dorota, and his thoughtful look follows Dorota's words to her dying husband "I love you very much". In *Dekalog, Five*, Theophanes appears as a worker to warn Jacek with his gaze, and again, as a worker carrying a ladder, who watches him going to the death cell. The most unusual way of filming this character occurs in the eighth episode: the place on which a student wearing a blue sweater sits when Elżbieta accuses God and Zofia of the lack of mercy, is empty in the bookending scenes. He is physically absent, but becomes visible only for some.

Dekalog turned out to be a breakthrough in Kieślowski's career: until then he was only a local director, but these movies opened to international audiences and became the subjects of many foreign reviews and publications. *A Short Film About Killing* won, amongst others, the Cannes Film Festival Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI Prize as well as the first

European Film Award; *A Short Film About Love* and *Dekalog* were highly acclaimed at the festivals in São Paulo and San Sebastian, among others. *Dekalog* is the only Polish film that was included in the so-called 'Vatican list' of 45 films, compiled on the occasion of the cinema's 100th anniversary, recommended by the Pontifical Council for Social Communication and the Vatican Film Library. Ingmar Bergman considered Kieślowski's work to be one of the five movies most important to him. Kieślowski made his next films abroad – in France and Switzerland – and his works, gradually discovered, became an inspiration for other film-makers.

Twenty-five years after *Dekalog*'s premiere Kieślowski's friend Krzysztof Zanussi wrote a bit sadly: "Its success came too late! Krzysztof became famous when he did not need to. He was happy to have opportunities he had not had before, but he said that he would not believe in admiration. His life was not a sequence of success; it was a great drama with burdens that he carried till the end and that is why he made a gesture that we resented him for: he decided to retire from film-making. It was his defiance." ●

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Film Credits

This list itemises people who worked on all ten episodes of *Dekalog*. One-off contributions (notably actors and cinematographers) are listed under the relevant individual episode title.

Directed by **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Written by **Krzysztof Piesiewicz** and **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Production Design by **Halina Dobrowolska**

Set Decoration by **Magdalena Dipont**

Costumes by **Małgorzata Obłóza** and **Hanna Ćwikło**

Make-up by **Dorota Seweryńska**

Edited by **Ewa Smal**

Music by **Zbigniew Preisner**

Produced by **Ryszard Chutkowski**

for **Telewizja Polska**, **Tor Film Unit**, **Sender Freies (Berlin)**

Second Unit Director **Teresa Violetta Buhl**

First Assistant Director **Dariusz Przychoda**

Lighting **Jerzy Tomczuk** (head), **Tomasz Gradowski**,
Krzysztof Koperski, **Józef Trzoch**, **Marek Modzelewski**

Additional Production Design **Grażyna Tkaczyk**, **Robert Czesak**

Design Assistants **Anna Iskierka-Małaśnicka**, **Sławomir Janowski**

Props **Stefan Witkowski**, **Dariusz Brus**, **Krzysztof Budzyński**

Head of Construction **Waldemar Weiss**

Assistant Costume Designer **Jolanta Włodarczyk**

Wardrobe Mistress **Helena Tarnacka**

Music Recording **Zbigniew Malecki**

Assistant Editors **Henryka Dancygier**, **Urszula Reklajtis**

Make-up Assistants **Jadwiga Wocial**, **Jolanta Pruszyńska**

Graphic Design **Mirosław Mentcel**

Consultants **Robert Brzeziński**, **Franciszek Szydelko**,
Andrzej Zaczyński

Production Coordinators **Paweł Mantorsk**, **Włodzimierz Bendych**

Producer's Assistants **Włodzimierz Dziatkiewicz**, **Anna Fiedoruk**

Unit Manager **Andrzej Buhl**

Unit Secretary **Mirosława Serafin**

Administration **Anna Kowalska**, **Małgorzata Dedek**

Studio **Warsaw Documentary Film Studio**



Dekalog, One

Dekalog, jeden

CAST

Henryk Baranowski as Krzysztof

Wojciech Kłata as Paweł, Krzysztof's son

Maja Komorowska as Irena, Krzysztof's sister

Artur Barciś as the man by the lake

Agnieszka Brustman as the chess player

Maciej Borniński as Jacek's father

Maria Gładkowska as Ania

Ewa Kania as Ewa Jezierska

Aleksandra Kisielewska as Jacek's mother

Aleksandra Majsiuk as Ola

Magda Sroga-Mikołajczyk as the journalist

Maciej Sławiński as the head teacher

and

Anna Smal-Romańska

Bożena Wróbel

Piotr Wyrzykowski

CREW

Cinematography by **Wiesław Zdort**

Sound by **Małgorzata Jaworska**

Assistant Director **Olaf Lubaszenko**

Second Unit Director **Dariusz Jabłoński**

Camera Operator **Jerzy Rudziński**

Assistant Cameraman **Piotr Jaszcuk**

Wardrobe **Helena Tarnacka**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Consultant **Maciej Kalinowski**

Stunt Team **Tomasz Przybysz, Janusz Chlebowski,
Ryszard Janikowski, Robert Brzeziński,
Józef Stefański**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“So, who is he?”

Eleven-year-old Paweł is brought up by his single father. His mother lives far away, in Australia. His aunt Irena helps to raise her nephew, introducing him into the world of faith. The boy asks his father and aunt questions regarding death, the meaning of life and God. When Paweł is given his Christmas present early – a longed-for pair of ice skates – his father, in order to ensure his son's safety, uses his computer to calculate that the ice covering the neighbourhood lake is sufficiently thick to hold him. The skating trip finishes tragically for Paweł and his friend Marek. The story, simple and dramatic, was inspired by a real-life experience underwent by co-author Krzysztof Piesiewicz, whose son did not come back home on time one day.

Not many authors writing about Kieślowski's works notice that the first part of *Dekalog* is almost entirely a flashback, even doubled: the episode's first character is a silent man played by Artur Barciś, sitting by a fire near the lake. This intense look of the witness of the accident gazing straight into the viewers' eyes is very important. His teardrop, ambiguous, as it happens in Kieślowski's films, is in response to another teardrop: Irena's, moved by an image on the TV screen, on which her nephew can be seen courtesy of a news item filmed in his school. The symmetry of teardrops also appears in the final scene of the film, when the boy's death causes his father-agnostic to rebel (against whom?) and enter a church – and also the sympathy of the Black Madonna whose face is covered with melted wax 'teardrops' dripping down the candle. The story of Paweł is his aunt's flashback, which finishes with the boy's face disappearing from the screen. Artur Barciś closes this *Dekalog* story – and its next nine parts – with his stare. ●



Dekalog, Two

Dekalog, dwa

CAST

Krystyna Janda as Dorota Geller

Aleksander Bardini as the consultant

Olgiert Łukaszewicz as Andrzej Geller, Dorota's husband

Artur Barciś as the orderly

Stanisław Gawlik as Wacek the postman

Krzysztof Kumor as the gynaecologist

Maciej Szary as the caretaker

Krystyna Bigelmajer as the nurse

Karol Dillenius as the patient next to Andrzej

Ewa Ekwińska as Mrs Basia

Jerzy Fedorowicz as Janek Wierzbicki

Piotr Siejka as the doctor

Aleksander Trąbczyński as Dorota's lover's friend

Piotr Fronczewski as Dorota's lover

CREW

Cinematography by **Edward Kłosiński**

Sound by **Małgorzata Jaworska**

Assistant Director **Olaf Lubaszenko**

Second Unit Director **Dariusz Jabłoński**

Camera Operator **Edward Kłosiński**

Assistant Cameraman **Piotr Jaszczuk**

Wardrobe **Maria Mikulska**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Piano **Bożena Banaszkiewicz**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

"I love you very much."

"Swear to it!" – in this demand made of a hard-faced doctor by the pregnant Dorota, torn apart between the love of her dying husband, the love of her lover living overseas and her hitherto unrealisable desire to become a mother, the second commandment of the Decalogue echoes. At first the doctor refuses to tell her his uncertain prognosis, but he realises that the unborn child's life is at stake. He reminisces about his experiences during the war, when he lost all his family. All that he has left is a photo of his family and a damaged faith in God who, he believes, is not Almighty, but merely a private divinity. Yet, barely noticed by anyone, a hospital orderly, played by Artur Barciś, recalls the reality that is not subject to human predictions and limitations.

The final section of the second episode of *Dekalog* consists of two moving sequences: the first is a masterful travelling utopia taking the viewers from the solitude of characters enclosed in the micro-worlds of their experiences and feelings to a hospital room, where in a glass of compôte a bee is fighting for its life, symbolically promising victory over death. The final scene has a clearly religious character: during a nocturnal conversation with the doctor, Andrzej, who looks similar to the dead Christ in a Renaissance painting by Andrea Mantegna, confesses that he "came back from beyond". The ambiguity of the ending – perhaps the talk with Andrzej is only a dream? – finds its explanation in the fifth and eighth parts of the cycle; nevertheless, this does not dispel some doubts. ●



Dekalog, Three

Dekalog, trzy

CAST

Daniel Olbrychski as Janusz

Maria Pakulnis as Ewa, Janusz's ex-lover

Joanna Szczepkowska as Janusz's wife

Artur Barciś as the tram driver

Krzysztof Kumor and **Jerzy Zygmunt Nowak** as the doctors

Dorota Stalińska as the skateboarding railway worker

Jacek Kałucki as the policeman

Włodzimierz Musiał as the nurse in the drying-out centre

Henryk Baranowski as Krzysztof

Edward Kłosiński as Edward Garus, Ewa's lover

and

Krystyna Drochocka

Zygmunt Fok

Barbara Kołodziejska

Maria Krawczyk

Piotr Rzymyszkiewicz

Włodzimierz Rzeczycki

CREW

Cinematography by **Piotr Sobociński**

Sound by **Nikodem Wolk-Łaniewski**

Assistant Director **Olaf Lubaszenko**

Second Unit Director **Dariusz Jabłoński**

Camera Operator **Dariusz Panas**

Assistant Cameraman **Piotr Jaszcuk**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Stunt Team **Robert Brzeziński, Janusz Chlebowski,
Ryszard Janikowski, Kazimierz Grześkowiak,
Marek Sadowski, Józef Stefański**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“Are you going out again?”

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” Do you also have to remember the night, even if it is Christmas Eve? The single father from *Dekalog, One* is looking at the window of his neighbours living on the first floor, sitting around the table and waiting for Christmas presents. This happy and idyllic picture of a loving family shatters when Janusz goes outside, provoked by his ex-lover Ewa. They drive around the deserted city under the pretext of finding her missing husband. In the morning their old feelings seem to erupt again, but are interrupted by little Christmas carol singers ringing the doorbell to sing about the birth of Jesus in the small hours. Before the dawn, Ewa reveals to Janusz that she made a dangerous bet with herself as she did not want to spend the night of Christmas Eve alone. The other woman, Janusz’s wife, has been waiting for him all night long suspecting the true reason for his disappearance. “Was it Ewa? – Ewa...”

This episode relating to the third commandment shows a comprehensive understanding of the Decalogue: breaking just one commandment can lead to a violation of the remaining ones. Janusz leaves his family; he lusts, drives recklessly to put his and others’ lives at risk, whereas Ewa teeters on the edge of adultery, thinking of suicide; they both lie. Kieślowski sympathetically observes their weaknesses and confused lives; he lets them find the way out. The character played by Artur Barciś, driving a tram across whose path Janusz speeds becomes a symbol: you should keep to the right road. The final scene showing Janusz’s confession and his wife’s silent forgiveness also brings hope. ●



Dekalog, Four

Dekalog, cztery

CAST

Adrianna Biedrzyńska as Anka

Janusz Gajos as Michał, Anka's father

Artur Barciś as the canoeist

Aleksander Bardini as the consultant

Adam Hanuszkiewicz as Anka's theatre teacher

Jan Tesarz as Waldemar Rekowski, taxi driver

Igor Śmiałowski as the man in Okęcie

Andrzej Blumenfeld as Adam, Michał's friend

Tomasz Kozłowicz as Jarek, Anka's boyfriend

Elżbieta Kilarzka as Jarek's mother

Helena Norowicz as the ophthalmologist

Andrzej Chyra as a theatre student

CREW

Cinematography by **Krzysztof Pakulski**

Assistant Directors **Dariusz Jabłoński, Paweł Rzepkowski,
Winfried Bolenz**

Camera Operator **Krzysztof Pakulski**

Assistant Cameraman **Zdzisław Wajda**

Wardrobe **Maria Mikulska**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound by **Małgorzata Jaworska**

Sound Technician **Jerzy Murawski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Stunt Team **Robert Brzeziński, Józef Stefański**

Stills **Janusz Całka**

“To my daughter, Anka.”

The *Dekalog* films are basically intimate dramas: two main characters, and the one played by Artur Barciś (either absent or reappearing in different roles) are enough to make the story appealing to viewers' emotions and imaginations. The fourth part of the cycle begins on Easter Monday. Michał, according to tradition (as only such gestures are left from the Easter celebrations) plays a water-based trick on his adult daughter. A bit later, he goes abroad on a business trip leaving, probably on purpose, an envelope with the unsettling message: “Open after my death.” There is another envelope inside addressed by Anka's mother when she was close to death, apparently writing about an important secret. When Anka is about to open the letter, the look of an oarsman (Artur Barciś) whom she meets, apparently not without a reason, stops her from crossing an uncrossable barrier.

Anka's orderly life is shattered by suppositions and uncertainty: if Michał is not her father, is a love other than a daughter's love towards her father possible? The mystery of this melodrama remains unsolved; the late mother's letter, read (or unread) – or maybe only a copy written by her daughter? – is burnt. The opening sequence showing both characters standing by the windows – which, by the way, are important motifs in the whole cycle (before or after? in the same flat or not?) – contains a similar mystery. Is it the reason why the doctor, the neighbour from *Dekalog, Two*, appears in the same episode as a drama of love broken prematurely? ●



Dekalog, Five

Dekalog, pięć

CAST

Mirosław Baka as Jacek Łazar

Krzysztof Globisz as lawyer Piotr Balicki

Jan Tesarz as taxi driver Waldemar Rekowski

Artur Barciś as the road worker

Krystyna Janda as Dorota Geller

Olgierd Łukaszewicz as Andrzej Geller

Maciej Szary as the caretaker

Zbigniew Zapasiewicz as the Chairman of the Bar Association

Aleksander Bednarz as the hangman

Barbara Dziekan-Vajda as the cinema cashier

Elżbieta Helman as Beatka, grocery worker

Helena Kowalczykowa as the old woman feeding pigeons

Borys Marynowski as the sentry

Maciej Maciejewski as the public prosecutor

Sylwester Maciejewski and **Andrzej Mastalerz** as Jacek's brothers

Zdzisław Rychter as the cartoonist

Karol Stępkowski as the would-be taxi passenger

Zdzisław Tobiasz as the judge

Jerzy Zass as the warden

Leonard Andrzejewski as the drunk man at the taxi stand

Henryk Łapiński as the Bar Committee member

and

Zbigniew Borek

Władysław Byrdy

Iwona Głębicka

CREW

Cinematography by **Sławomir Idziak**

Assistant Directors **Dariusz Jabłoński**, **Paweł Rzepkowski**,
Winfried Bolenz

Camera Operator **Sławomir Idziak**

Assistant Cameraman **Henryk Jednak**

Wardrobe **Maria Mikulska**

Music Performed by the **Symphony Orchestra of Polish Radio and
Television** (Katowice)

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Małgorzata Przedpełska-Bieniek**

Sound by **Małgorzata Jaworska**

Sound Technician **Jerzy Murawski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Stanisław Hojden**

Consultant **Stanisław Mikke**

Stunt Team **Robert Brzeziński**, **Józef Stefański**,
Janusz Chlebowski, **Andrzej Buhl**

Stills **Jacek Cichecki**

“Not until you called me...”

On 16 March 1985 in Warsaw, three alternately shown characters cross paths in a gruesome way: a young lawyer who is about to take the bar exam; Jacek, a young man from the countryside, lost in a big city; and a rude taxi driver with a little devil. Piotr, an opponent of the death penalty, tells the examiners with great conviction that his job would give him the chance to meet people that he would otherwise have no chance to meet. But he does not notice Jacek preparing for murder in the bar in Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. If he had noticed him and talked to him, he might have stopped the young man who, as Tadeusz Lubelski wrote, “was living with his false image like with an unexploded bullet, which had to explode one day”, carrying the burden of responsibility for his sister's accidental death. But he notices – and ignores – a road worker (Artur Barciś) pointing at the symbolic number 5.

The action takes place over three days, almost one year apart: the crime, the lost court case, and the execution performed in March one year later. Tragically, only then – and too late – can we hear Jacek recounting the story of his life. Kiesłowski returns to the theme shown already in his earlier film, *Blind Chance*. The victim was accidental, the taxi passenger was accidental: if the taxi driver had not ignored the couple from *Dekalog, Two* that wanted to take his cab, he could have stayed alive. However, the relationships are not incidental: in this film opposing the death penalty, the director demands to recognise Jacek's dignity regardless of the crime he committed. Piotr, dreaming about justice that cannot be seen as revenge on a criminal, asks: "For whom does law avenge?" ●



Dekalog, Six *Dekalog, sześć*

CAST

Grażyna Szapołowska as Magda

Olaf Lubaszenko as Tomek

Stefania Iwińska as Tomek's landlady

Artur Barciś as the man with the suitcase

Stanisław Gawlik as Wacek the postman

Piotr Machalica as Roman

Rafał Imbro and **Jan Piechociński** as Magda's lovers

Małgorzata Rożniatowska as the postmistress

CREW

Cinematography by **Witold Adamek**

Second Unit Director **Paweł Rzepkowski**

Assistant Director **Dariusz Jabłoński**

Camera Operator **Witold Adamek**

Assistant Cameraman **Piotr Jaszcuk**

Wardrobe **Maria Mikulska**

Music Performed by the **Polish Radio and Television Orchestra**
(Kraków)

Music Conducted by **Zbigniew Preisner**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound by **Nikodem Wołk-Łaniewski**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Joanna Napieralska**

Foley Sound **Stanisław Hojden**

Stunt Team **Janusz Chlebowski, Robert Brzeziński,**
Ryszard Janikowski

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“There’s no such thing.
– There is.”

The opening sequence presents both characters setting the scene for the drama that will play out between them: a window separates them, they are of different ages and social statuses; all that they can do is watch and be watched. In the precise structure of the sixth film of *Dekalog*, three parts, each almost the same length, can be distinguished. In the first, the woman is seen from Tomek’s viewpoint, separated by windows and the lens of a telescope, only seemingly coming closer. The middle part comprises their meetings: the love-struck young man confesses to spying on her, tells her that he loves her but that he expects nothing. The third part is shown from the woman’s point of view: now she starts to search for the young man and discovers that love exists which does not merely equate to physiological satisfaction.

The film, if watched carelessly, may seem to be just a story about a Peeping Tom: however, it is worth noticing how Tomek does not look at his attractive neighbour. Only a few minutes before the end we learn her name: Magda (Magdalene), referring to the established cultural stereotype of a sinful woman. In the Gospel she became a reformed woman who changed due to her meeting with Christ; in Kieślowski’s film the transformation of Magda takes place thanks to Tomek and his unselfish love. The film emphasises it using symbols taken from the Gospel: a price paid by Tomek for Magda’s liberation is climbing Golgotha in the company of a man wearing a white coat (Artur Barciś). *A Short Film About Love*, a feature version of *Dekalog, Six*, finishes even more optimistically. ●



Dekalog, Seven

Dekalog, siedem

CAST

Anna Polony as Ewa, Majka's mother

Maja Barełkowska as Majka

Władysław Kowalski as Stefan, Majka's father

Bogusław Linda as Wojtek, Ania's father

Artur Barciś as the man at the station

Bożena Dykiel as the Józefów station ticket-seller

Katarzyna Piwowarczyk as Ania, Majka's daughter

Dariusz Jabłoński as Wojtek's friend

Jan Mayzel as Grzegorz, Stefan's friend

Ewa Radzikowska as the ticket-seller at the Palace of Culture and Science

and

Stefania Błońska, Mirosława Maludzińska, Wanda Wróblewska

CREW

Cinematography by **Dariusz Kuc**

Assistant Directors **Dariusz Jabłoński, Paweł Rzepkowski,
Winfried Bolenz**

Camera Operator **Dariusz Kuc**

Assistant Cameraman **Henryk Jedynak**

Wardrobe **Maria Mikulska**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound by Nikodem **Wołk-Łaniewski**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Consultant **Józef Bader**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“Haven’t I got a mother?”

“Is it possible to steal someone?” – it turns out, it is. Majka, a student, runs away from home, abducting her 6-year-old daughter Ania, the fruit of her romance with her former teacher. To avoid scandal, the girl was adopted by her grandmother, who deprived Majka of her right to be a parent. Too implausible to be true? Not really. When a practising lawyer, Krzysztof Piesiewicz encountered an even more dramatic case, as it was connected with incest. A child asking whether she still has a mother becomes a victim of long-term misunderstanding, the inability to love, growing grievance and hate, like other children in Kieślowski’s cycle. Somewhere in the background there are fathers – Majka’s and Ania’s, as guilty as the others, but silent and absent, running away from responsibility.

In the seventh part of the cycle even the man played by Artur Barciś is helpless. In earlier episodes he influenced the main characters by looking at them at crucial moments. Here, he impersonates a man leaning on crutches at the Józefów railway station on Sunday morning, who gets out of the train onto which Majka jumps when running away from her parents and abandoning a confused Ania. Does this man with crutches, seen from a distance, arrive too late to help reduce the aggression between two women that has lasted for years?

Kieślowski consistently lets his characters appear in different episodes: in *Dekalog, Nine*, Ania plays alone at the playground and is watched from the window by the doctor considering adopting a child with his wife. Inside, behind another window, one of many similar windows in the same block of flats, another drama is unfolding. ●



Dekalog, Eight

Dekalog, osiem

CAST

Maria Kościałkowska as Zofia, the ethics professor

Teresa Marczevska as Elżbieta Loranc

Artur Barciś as the student at Zofia's lecture

Tadeusz Łomnicki as the tailor

Marian Opania as the Dean

Bronisław Pawlik as Zofia's philatelist neighbour

Wojciech Asiński as the student speaking at Zofia's lecture

Marek Kępiński as the Noakowski building resident

Krzysztof Rojek as the man exercising in the park

Jerzy Schejbal as the priest

Jacek Strzemżalski as the Noakowski building caretaker

Wojciech Sanejko, **Ewa Skibińska**, **Wojciech Starostecki**,
Anna Zagórska and **Marek Kasprzyk** as students

and

Janusz Mond

Hanna Szczerkowska

CREW

Cinematography by **Andrzej J. Jaroszewicz**

Assistant Directors **Dariusz Jabłoński, Paweł Rzepkowski**

Camera Operator **Andrzej J. Jaroszewicz**

Assistant Cameraman **Tomasz Suprowicz, Piotr Jaszczuk**

Wardrobe **Maria Mikulska**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound by **Wiesława Dembińska**

Sound Technician **Jerzy Murawski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Stunt Development **Robert Brzeziński, Krzysztof Rojek**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“One can know, without doubts, without using the words.”

Two women unexpectedly meet: Elżbieta, a Jew of Polish origin living in the USA, studying the stories of people that survived the Holocaust, and an elderly ethics professor. They first met a long time ago but only now does Zofia recognise her as the girl that she refused to help during the Nazi occupation in order not to risk exposing the Resistance movement. The reason for her refusal, remembered by Elżbieta, was that she could not bring herself to lie to the God that she believes in. Zofia has been living with the guilt of believing that she was responsible for the death of an innocent child, and Elżbieta with decades of belief that she was rejected.

The film, probably inspired by Hanna Krall (“I once told Kieślowski about this girl I know very well – the one from *Dekalog, Eight*”) is one of the first stories referring to the Holocaust as well as to Polish and Jewish relations in Polish cinema. The director indicates both the guilt and the unsolvable dilemma at the same time, eventually taking the child’s side. The story from *Dekalog, Two* told by Zofia in the auditorium, and its conclusion (“the child’s life is the most important factor”) recalls the memories of Elżbieta (and is followed by the look of an anonymous student with an already familiar face). Kieślowski, however, does not lock himself in the past but shows the solution. It consists of revealing the hurt caused by lying, finding the truth about reasons for particular actions, and forgiveness without which the future will be bitter. The eighth film, for the first time since *Dekalog, One*, poses a question regarding God: in the two women’s nocturnal conversation His name from the Old and the New Testaments is recalled. ●



Dekalog, Nine

Dekalog, dziewięć

CAST

Ewa Błaszczyk as Hanna Nycz

Piotr Machalica as Roman Nycz, Hanna's husband

Artur Barciś as the cyclist

Jan Jankowski as Mariusz Zawidzki, Hanna's lover

Jolanta Piętek-Górecka as Ola Roman's patient

Katarzyna Piwowarczyk as Ania

Jerzy Trela as Doctor Mikołaj

Małgorzata Boratyńska as the nurse

Janusz Cywiński as the consultant

Sławomir Kwiatkowski as the ski rental employee

Dariusz Przychoda as Janusz, KLM employee

and

Renata Berger

Jolanta Cichoń

CREW

Cinematography by **Piotr Sobociński**

Second Unit Director **Paweł Rzepkowski**

Assistant Director **Dariusz Jabłoński, Winfried Bolenz**

Camera Operator **Piotr Sobociński**

Assistant Cameraman **Piotr Jaszczyk**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Singer **Elżbieta Towarnicka**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound by **Nikodem Wołk-Łaniewski**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Joanna Napieralska**

Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Stunt Development **Robert Brzeziński, Janusz Chiebowski,
Ryszard Janikowski, Tomasz Przybysz**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“God... you are.”

Two unsuccessful suicide attempts, both observed by Artur Barciś, open and close this episode, in which the main character, a cardiologist, cannot accept the fact that his friend, a sexologist, diagnosed him with permanent and incurable impotency. Roman's wife tries to convince him that love does not just mean sex, but he suggests that she should feel released from her promise of marital fidelity. The crisis begins when Roman discovers that Hanka has had an affair with Mariusz, a much younger lover, for a long time. The reference to the Ten Commandments, so unambiguous in Kieślowski's films, is shown here in a surprising way: Hanka is the object of desire of both her husband and Mariusz. The test that the couple's love is put to finally leads to its purification.

This penultimate episode also reveals the working method of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz in allowing ideas to mature: individual films, despite being closed narrative units, are linked and refer to each other. Roman features in the sixth part of Kieślowski's cycle: during Tomek's milk round, he meets him by the gate of the block of flats – and they both experienced difficult love. Briefly, we can see Ania from the seventh part. The musical theme introduced by a young singer waiting for cardiac surgery (anticipating the character from 1991's *The Double Life of Véronique*) is very interesting. It is she who inspires Roman to listen to and enjoy the music of Van den Budenmayer, whose composition (*Nymphaea*) opens subsequent parts of *Dekalog*. A Dutch composer, this fictitious character (the music was composed by Zbigniew Preisner) returns in *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Three Colours*. ●



Dekalog, Ten

Dekalog, dziesięć

CAST

Jerzy Stuhr as Jerzy Janicki

Zbigniew Zamachowski as Artur Janicki, Jerzy's brother

Henryk Bista as the philately shop owner

Olaf Lubaszenko as Tomek

Maciej Stuhr as Piotrek, Jerzy's son

Jerzy Turek as the stock exchange philatelist

Anna Gornostaj as the nurse

Henryk Majcherek as the philately president

Elżbieta Panas as Jerzy's wife

Daniel Kozakiewicz as the stamp dealer in Świętokrzyskiej

Grzegorz Warchoła as Bromski

Cezary Harasimowicz as the police officer

CREW

Cinematography by **Jacek Bławut**

Second Unit Director **Dariusz Jabłoński**

Assistant Director **Olaf Lubaszenko**

Camera Operator **Jerzy Rudziński**

Assistant Cameraman **Piotr Jaszcuk**

Music Performed by the **Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra**

Music Conducted by **Zdzisław Szostak**

Music Consultant **Janina Kurec**

Sound by **Nikodem Wołk-Łaniewski**

Sound Technician **Piotr Pacholski**

Assistant Sound Recordist **Małgorzata Krupa**

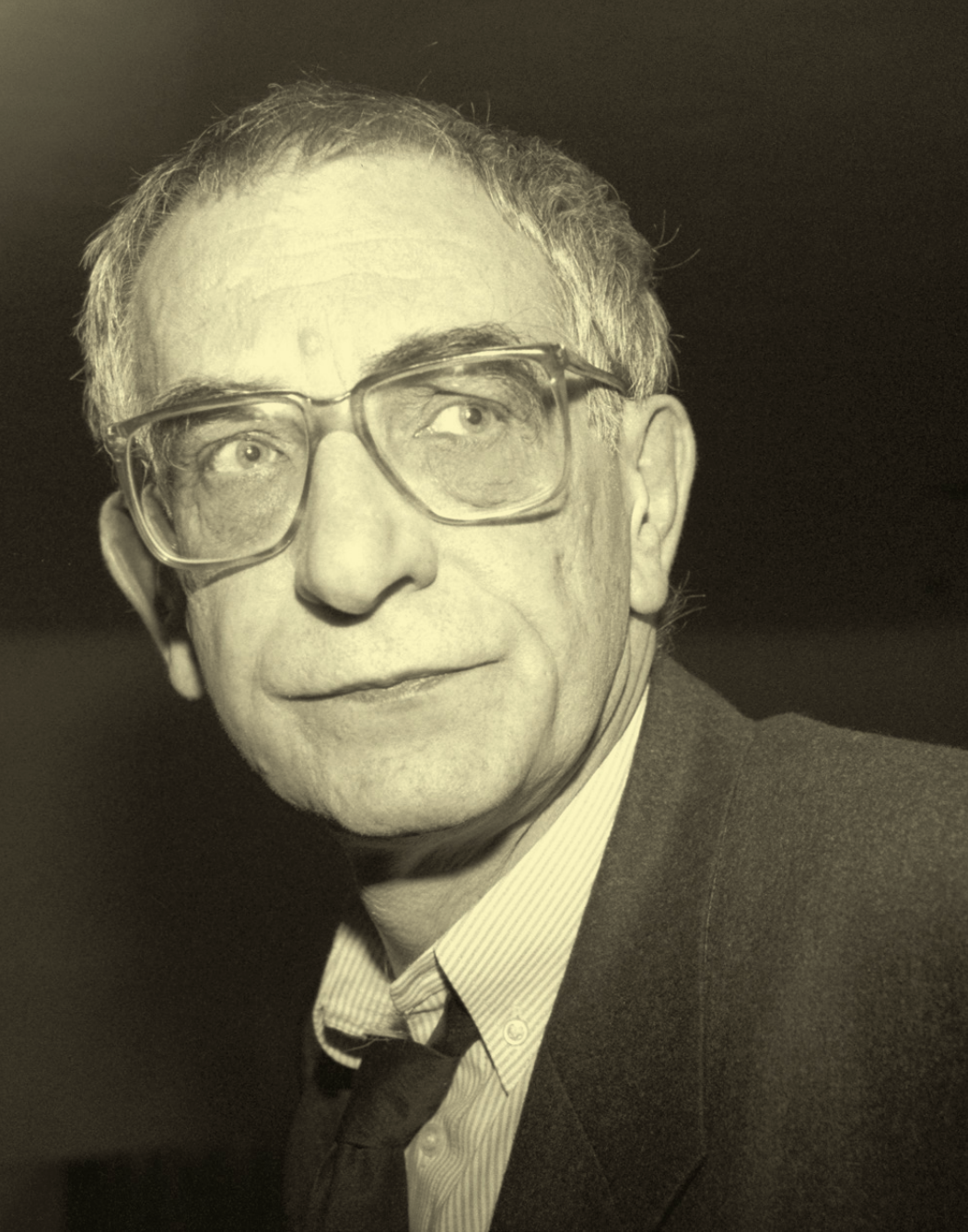
Foley Sound **Bogdan Nowak**

Stills **Andrzej Burchard**

“It’s all that’s left.”

Jerzy and Artur meet at the funeral of their father, a stamp collector who devoted his life to his passion (he appears in *Dekalog, Eight* with his stamp Polarfahrt). Their father had not had a good relationship with them, and only after his death do they find out that the collection he had gathered for many years is very valuable. The inherited wealth begins to spoil their relationship: Jerzy decides to donate his kidney in exchange for a single stamp missing from an incomplete series. Unfortunately, during this operation their father’s flat is broken into and burgled. The brothers become suspicious of their father’s former friends, but also of each other.

The last film of the cycle differs from earlier parts of *Dekalog* in almost all aspects: it is a black comedy, not a drama. This time Artur Barciś, who used to accompany the central characters in crucial moments, does not appear. Maybe this is because his role was taken over by Tomek from the sixth episode, who serves the brothers at the post office and sells them ordinary stamps? The beginning of the film is also different: Artur stands on the stage and shouts the lyrics: “Kill, kill, and kill! Commit adultery, covet things all the week!” The call for breaking the commandments, to the importance of which Kieślowski’s cycle is devoted, turns out to be heavily ironic. *Dekalog, Ten* is a masterful summary of violations of almost all commandments: not only the coveting of things, the “disease” contracted by the sons from their deceased father, but also theft, adultery, an indifferent attitude towards family, and disrespect of God. But in the characters’ final humiliation, the director’s evident pity still offers them hope. ●



Krzysztof Kieślowski on *Dekalog*

Published by Faber & Faber in 1993 to coincide with the UK release of *Three Colours: Blue*, *Kieślowski on Kieślowski* was the first substantial book about Krzysztof Kieślowski in English, and remains a definitive text, not least because it presents the director's own forthright and intensely self-critical opinions, sympathetically transcribed and edited by his long-term friend Danusia Stok. Arrow Academy is very grateful to Mrs Stok and to Faber & Faber for granting us permission to reproduce these extracts, in which Kieślowski not only discusses *Dekalog* in depth but also his five other television productions.

While [the controversy over Kieślowski's previous film *No End*] was going on, I happened to bump into my co-scriptwriter in the street. He's a lawyer, roams around, hasn't got much to do. Maybe he's got time for thinking. It's true that he has had a bit to do over the last few years because we had martial law and he took part in quite a few political trials in Poland. But martial law finished sooner than we'd all expected. And one day I bumped into him. It was cold. It was raining. I'd lost one of my gloves. "Someone should make a film about the Ten Commandments," Piesiewicz said to me. "You should do it." A terrible idea, of course.

Piesiewicz doesn't know how to write. But he can talk. He can talk and not only can he talk but he can think. We spend hours on end talking about our friends, our wives, our children, our skis, our cars. But we keep going back to what would be useful for the story we're inventing. It's very often Krzysztof who has the basic ideas; ones which, in fact, look as if they can't be filmed. And I defend myself against them, of course.

Chaos and disorder ruled Poland in the mid-1980s – everywhere, everything, practically everybody's life. Tension, a feeling of hopelessness, and a fear of yet worse to come were obvious. I'd already started to travel abroad a bit by this time and observed a general uncertainty in the world at large. I'm not even thinking about politics here but about ordinary, everyday life. I sensed mutual indifference behind polite smiles and had the overwhelming impression that, more and more frequently, I was watching people who didn't really know why they were living. So I thought Piesiewicz was right but filming the Ten Commandments would be a very difficult task.

Should it be one film? Several? Or maybe ten? A serial, or rather cycle of ten separate films based on each of the Commandments? This concept seemed closest to the idea of the Ten propositions, ten one-hour films. At this stage, it was a question of writing the screenplays – I wasn't thinking about directing yet. One of the reasons for starting work was the fact that for several years I'd been deputy to Krzysztof Zanussi, artistic head of the Tor Production House. Zanussi was working largely abroad so he made general decisions while the day-to-day running of the Production House was left to me. One of the functions of the Production House is to help young directors make their first films. I knew a lot of directors like that who deserved a break and I knew how difficult it was to find the money. For a long time in Poland television has been the natural home for directorial debuts – TV films are shorter and cheaper, so less risk is involved. The difficulty lay in the fact that Polish Television wasn't interested in one-off films. It wanted serials and, if pushed, agreed to cycles. So I thought that if we wrote ten screenplays and presented them as *Dekalog*, ten young directors would be able to make their first film. For a while, this idea motivated our writing. It was only much later, when the first versions of the screenplays

were ready, that I realised rather selfishly that I didn't want to hand them over to anybody else. I had grown to like some of them and would have been sorry to let them go. I wanted to direct the films and it became obvious that I would do all ten.

We knew from the very beginning that the films would be contemporary. For a while, we considered setting them in the world of politics but, by the mid-1980s, politics had ceased to interest us.

During martial law, I realised that politics aren't really important. In a way, of course, they define where we are and what we're allowed or aren't allowed to do, but they don't solve the really important human questions. They're not in a position to do anything about or to answer any of our essential, fundamental, human and humanistic questions. In fact, it doesn't matter whether you live in a Communist country or a prosperous capitalist one as far as such questions are concerned, questions like: What is the true meaning of life? Why get up in the morning? Politics don't answer that.

Even when my films were about people involved in politics, I always tried to find out what sort of people they were. The political environment only formed a background. Even the short documentary films were always about people, about what they're like. They weren't political films. Politics were never the subject.

Even when, in *Camera Buff*, a man appears who represents the so-called other side, that is, the factory director who cuts out some scenes from the main character's film, he's also a human being. He isn't merely a representative of dull-witted bureaucrats who cut scenes out of films. He's also a man who's trying to explain why he intervenes. He is just like the censor in Warsaw who used to cut various bits out of my films. Through *Camera Buff*, I wanted to observe him and find out what lies behind his actions. Is he only dull-wittedly carrying out decisions? Is he aiming for a more comfortable life? Or maybe he's got reasons which I may not agree with but which are nevertheless reasons.

I'm sick of Polish realities because everything's running its course in spite of us, above us and there's nothing we can do about it. Piesiewicz

and I didn't believe that politics could change the world, let alone for the better. Also, we'd begun to suspect intuitively that *Dekalog* could be marketed abroad. So we decided to leave politics out.

Since life in Poland is hard – intolerable, in fact – I had to show a bit of this in the films. However, I did spare the viewers many very unpleasant things which happen in daily life. First, I saved them from anything as horrible as politics. Second, I didn't show queues in front of shops. Third, I didn't show such a thing as a ration card – although many goods were being rationed then. And fourth, I didn't show boring and dreadful traditions. I tried to show individuals in difficult situations. Everything pertaining to social hardships or life's difficulties in general was always somewhere in the background.

Dekalog is an attempt to narrate ten stories about ten or twenty individuals, who – caught in a struggle precisely because of these and not other circumstances, circumstances which are fictitious but which could occur in every life – suddenly realise that they're going round and round in circles, that they're not achieving what they want. We've become too egotistic, too much in love with ourselves and our needs, and it's as if everybody else has somehow disappeared into the background. We do a lot for our loved ones – supposedly – but when we look back over our day, we see that although we've done everything for them, we haven't got the strength or time left to take them in our arms, simply to have a kind word for them or say something tender. We haven't got any time left for feelings, and I think that's where the real problem lies. Or time for passion, which is closely tied up with feelings. Our lives slip away, through our fingers.

I believe everybody's life is worthy of scrutiny, has its secrets and dramas. People don't talk about their lives because they're embarrassed. They don't want to open old wounds, or are afraid of appearing old-fashioned and sentimental. So we wanted to begin each film in a way which suggested that the main character had been picked by the camera as if at random. We thought of a huge stadium in which, from among the hundred thousand faces, we'd focus on one in particular. We also had an idea that the camera should pick somebody out from a crowded street and then follow him or her throughout the rest of the film. In the

end we decided to locate the action in a large housing estate, with thousands of similar windows framed in the establishing shot. It's the most beautiful housing estate in Warsaw, which is why I chose it. It looks pretty awful so you can imagine what the others are like. The fact that the characters all live on one estate brings them together. Sometimes they meet, and say, "May I borrow a cup of sugar?"

Basically, my characters behave much as in other films, except that in *Dekalog* I probably concentrated more on what's going on inside them rather than what's happening on the outside. Before, I often used to deal with the surrounding world, with what's happening all around, how external circumstances and events influence people, and how people eventually influence external events. Now, in my work, I've thrown aside this external world and, more and more frequently, deal with people who come home, lock the door on the inside and remain alone with themselves.

I think that all people – and this is irrespective of the political system – have two faces. They wear one face in the street, at work, in the cinema, in the bus or car. In the West, that's the face of someone who is energetic, the face of someone who's successful or will be successful in the near future. That's the appropriate face to wear on the outside, and the appropriate face for strangers.

I think integrity is an extremely complicated combination and we can never ultimately say "I was honest" or "I wasn't honest". In all our actions and all the different situations in which we find ourselves, we find ourselves in a position from which there's really no way out – and even if there is, it's not a better way out, a good way out, it's only relatively better than the other options, or, to put it another way, the lesser evil. This, of course, defines integrity. One would like to be ultimately honest, but one can't. With all the decisions you make every day, you can never be ultimately honest.

A lot of people who have seemingly been the cause of a great deal of evil state that they were honest or couldn't have acted any other way. This is another trap, although what they say might be true. It's definitely like that in politics, although that's no justification. If you work in politics,

or in any other public sphere, you're publicly responsible. It can't be helped. You're always watched by others – if not in the newspapers then by your neighbours, family, loved ones, friends, acquaintances or even by strangers in the street. But, at the same time, there's something like a barometer in each of us. At least, I feel it very distinctly; in all the compromises I make, in all the wrong decisions I take, I have a very clear limit as to what I mustn't do, and I try not to do it. No doubt sometimes I do, but I try not to. And that has nothing to do with any description or exact definition of right and wrong. It has to do with concrete everyday decisions.

That's something we thought about a lot when we were working on *Dekalog*. What, in essence, is right and what is wrong? What is a lie and what is truth? What is honesty and what is dishonesty? And what should one's attitude to it be?

I think that an absolute point of reference does exist. Although I must say that when I think of God, it's more often the God of the Old Testament rather than the New. The God of the Old Testament is a demanding, cruel God; a God who doesn't forgive, who ruthlessly demands obedience to the principles which He has laid down. The God of the New Testament is a merciful, kind-hearted old man with a white beard, who just forgives everything. The God of the Old Testament leaves us a lot of freedom and responsibility, observes how we use it and then rewards or punishes, and there's no appeal or forgiveness. It's something which is lasting, absolute, evident and is not relative. And that's what a point of reference must be, especially for people like me, who are weak, who are looking for something, who don't know.

The concept of sin is tied up with this abstract, ultimate authority which we often call God. But I think that there's also a sense of sin against yourself which is important to me and really means the same thing. Usually, it results from weakness, from the fact that we're too weak to resist temptation; the temptation to have more money, comfort, to possess a certain woman or man, or the temptation to hold more power.

Then there's the question of whether we should live in fear of sin. That's an entirely different problem which also results from the tradition of the

Catholic or Christian faith. It's a little different in Judaism; they have a different concept of sin. That's why I spoke about a God of the Old Testament and a God of the New. I think that an authority like this does exist. As somebody once said, if God didn't exist then somebody would have to invent Him. But I don't think we've got perfect justice here, on earth, and we never will have. It's justice on our own scale and our scale is minute. We're tiny and imperfect.

If something is constantly nagging you that you've done the wrong thing, that means you know you could have done the right thing. You have criteria, a hierarchy of values. And that's what I think proves that we have a sense of what is right and wrong and that we are in a position to set our own inner compass. But often, even when we know what is honest and the right thing to do, we can't choose it. I believe we are not free. We're always fighting for some sort of freedom, and, to a certain extent, this freedom, especially external freedom, has been achieved – at least in the West, to a much greater extent than in the East. In the West, you've got the freedom to buy a watch or the pair of trousers you want. If you really need them, you buy them. You can go where you like. You've got the freedom to choose where you live. You're free to choose the conditions you live in. You can choose to live in one social circle rather than another, amongst one group of people rather than another. Whereas I believe we're just as much prisoners of our own passions, our own physiology, and certainly our own biology, as we were thousands of years ago. Prisoners of the rather complicated, and very frequently relative, division between what is better and what is a bit better and that which is a tiny bit better still, and what is a little bit worse. We're always trying to find a way out. But we're constantly imprisoned by our passions and feelings. You can't get rid of this. It makes no difference whether you've got a passport which allows you into every country or only into one and you stay there. It's a saying as old as the world – freedom lies within. It's true.

When people leave prison – I'm thinking about political imprisonment in particular – they're helpless when faced with life and they say they were only really free in prison. They were free there because they were sentenced to live in one room or cell with one particular person, or to eat only this or that. Outside prison you've got the freedom to choose

what you eat; you can go to an English, Italian, Chinese or French restaurant. You're free. Prisoners are not free to eat what they want because they only get what they're brought in a bucket. Prisoners are not free because they haven't the possibility of making moral or emotional choices, and they've got fewer choices because they don't have the day-to-day problems which fall on our shoulders every single day. They don't encounter love or can only experience longing. They don't have the possibility of satisfying their love.

Since there are far fewer choices to be made in prison, there's a much greater feeling of freedom than at the moment of leaving prison. Theoretically, when you leave, you've got the freedom of eating what you want, but in the realm of emotions, in the realm of your own passions, you're caught in a trap. People are always writing about this and I understand them very well.

The freedom we've achieved in Poland now doesn't really bring us anything, because we can't satisfy it. We can't satisfy it in the cultural sense because there isn't any money. There simply isn't any money to spare for culture. There also isn't any money for a lot of things which are more important than culture. So there is a paradox: we used to have money but no freedom, now we've got freedom but no money. We can't express our freedom because we haven't got the means. But if that's all there was to it, of course, it would be relatively simple; some day money will somehow be organised. The problem is more serious than that. Culture, and especially film, had enormous social significance in Poland once and it was important what sort of film you made. It was the same in all the east European countries. And in a sense masses of people waited to see what film Wajda or Zanussi, for example, would make next because for a great number of years film-makers hadn't come to terms with the existing state of affairs, and they tried to do something which would express this attitude. The nation in general couldn't come to terms with the existing state of affairs either. In this sense we were in a luxurious and unique situation. We were truly important in Poland – precisely because of censorship.

We're allowed to say everything now but people have stopped caring what we're allowed to say. Censorship bound authors to the same extent

as it did the public. The public knew the rules by which censorship worked and waited for a signal that these rules had been by-passed. It reacted to all these signs perfectly, read them, played with them. Censorship was an office and its workers were clerks. They had their regulations, books of injunctions and that's where they found words and situations which weren't allowed to be shown on screen. They'd cut them out. But they couldn't cut out words which hadn't been written in their regulations yet. They couldn't react to situations which their bosses hadn't described yet. We quickly learnt to find things which they didn't know yet and the public faultlessly recognised our intentions. So we communicated over the censors' heads. The public understood that when we spoke about a provincial theatre, we were speaking about Poland, and when we showed the dreams of a boy from a small town as being hard to fulfil, these dreams couldn't be fulfilled in the capital or anywhere else either. We were together, us and the public, in the aversion we had for a system which we didn't accept. Today this basic reason for being together doesn't exist anymore. We're lacking an enemy.

I have a good story about a censor. I have a friend in Kraków who's a graphic artist, a cartoonist mainly. His name is Andrzej Mleczko. He's an extremely intelligent and witty man. Of course, he had constant problems with the censors. They kept bothering him. They'd take his drawings. Recently, they abolished censorship. It doesn't exist. One day, Mleczko sent for a carpenter because he had to level out his banisters. And who should come along? The censor, of course. He gets hold of the plane and works the banister with it. Mleczko approaches and says, "I won't let that pass." So the censor planes the banister a second day. Mleczko watches him: "I won't let that pass." The censor went bankrupt.

The fact that we had censorship in Poland – which even worked quite well although it wasn't as intelligent as it could have been – didn't necessarily entail tremendous restrictions of freedom since, all in all, it was easier to make films there then than it is under the economic censorship here in the West. Economic censorship means censorship imposed by people who think that they know what the audience wants. In Poland, at the moment, there's exactly the same economic censorship – audience censorship – as there is in the West, except that audience

censorship in Poland is totally unprofessional. The producers or distributors are in no position to recognise the public.

When I had written all the screenplays for *Dekalog* I presented them to Polish Television and was allocated a budget, but I realised that we were still short of money. We had two sources of finance in Poland at that time. One was Polish Television. The other was the Ministry of Arts and Culture. So I went along to the Ministry; I took a few of the *Dekalog* screenplays with me and said, "I'll make you two films very cheaply, on the condition that one of them will be number five" – because I really wanted to make number five – "but you choose the other one." So they chose number six, and gave me some money. Not much but enough. I wrote longer versions of the screenplays. Later on, while shooting, I made the two versions of both films. One for the cinema, and the other for television. Everything got mixed up later on, of course. Scenes from television went to the cinema version, from the cinema version to television. But that's a pleasant game in the cutting-room. The nicest moment.

What is the difference between films made for television and those made for cinema? First, I don't think the television viewer is less intelligent than the cinema audience. The reason why television is the way it is, isn't because the viewers are slow-witted but because editors think they are. I think that's the problem with television. This doesn't apply so much to British television which isn't as stupid as German, French or Polish television. British television is a little more predisposed to education, on the one hand, and, on the other, to presenting opinions and matters connected with culture. These things are treated far more broadly and seriously by British television, especially the BBC or Channel 4, and this is done through their precise, broad and exact documentary films and films about individuals. Whereas television in most countries – including America – is as idiotic as it is because the editors think people are idiots. I don't think people are idiots and that's why I treat both audiences equally seriously. Consequently, I don't see any great difference in the narration or style between films made for television and those made for cinema.

There is a difference in that you always have less money when making a television film, so you have less time. You have to make TV films faster and a little less carefully. The staging has to be simpler, shots are closer rather than wider because in a wider shot you'd have to set up more scenery. That's where the principle of television close-ups came from. When I see films on television where there are very wide shots, even American large budget films, they're very watchable on the small screen. Perhaps you can't see everything in such detail but the impression is much the same. The impression is equally one of size. What doesn't pass the test on television is *Citizen Kane*, for example, which doesn't look right on television because it requires greater concentration than is possible on the small screen.

The difference between the cinema and television audience is very simple. The cinema-goer watches a film in a group, with other people. The television viewer watches alone. I've never yet seen a television viewer hold his girlfriend by the hand, but in the cinema it's the general rule. Personally, I think that television means solitude while cinema means community. In the cinema, the tension is between the screen and the whole audience and not only between the screen and you. It makes an enormous difference. That is why it's not true that the cinema is a mechanical toy.

It's a well-known theory that film has twenty-four frames to the second, and that a film is always the same; but that's not true. Even though the reel might be exactly the same, the film's entirely different when it's shown in a huge cinema, to an audience of a thousand, where a certain tension and atmosphere are created in perfect conditions, on a perfect screen, and with perfect sound. It's a completely different film when shown in a small, smelly cinema in the suburbs, to an audience of four, one of whom might be snoring. It's a different film. It's not that you experience it differently. It is different. In this sense, films are hand-made; even though a film can be repeated because the reels are the same, each screening is unrepeatable.

Those are the main differences between television and cinema films. But, of course, there are also characteristics specific to television films

which are mainly based on the fact that television has got people used to certain things. I'm not talking about stupidity – God forbid – but it has got people used to certain things. For example, to the fact that every evening or once a week the same TV characters will pay them a visit. That's one of the conventions when you make a serial, for example, and people have grown used to it, have grown to like these visits, like their family visiting them on Sundays or having Sunday lunch with their friends. If they've got any sympathy for the characters, that is. The Americans try very hard to make their characters likeable even though you might have reservations about them.

So television films have to be narrated in a way to satisfy the viewers' needs to see their friends and acquaintances again. That's the general convention and I think that's where I went wrong in *Dekalog*. *Dekalog* was made as a number of individual films. The same characters reappear only now and again and you have to pay great attention and concentrate very hard to recognise them and notice that the films are interconnected. If you watch the films one a week, you don't really notice this. That's why wherever I had any influence on how the films would be shown on television, I always asked that they be shown at least two a week, so that the viewer would have a chance to see what brings the characters together. But that means I made an obvious mistake in not following conventions. I'd probably make the same mistake again today because I think there was some sense in the films being separate – but it was a mistake as regards the viewers' expectations.

Talking about conventions, one more thing has to be mentioned. When you go to the cinema, whatever it's like, you always concentrate because you've paid for the ticket, made a great effort to get on the bus, taken an umbrella because it's raining outside, or left the house at a certain time. So, because of the money and effort spent, you want to experience something. That's very basic. Consequently you're in a position to watch more complicated relationships between characters, more complicated plots, and so on. With television, it's different. When you're watching television, you experience everything that's going on around you: the scrambled eggs which are burning, the kettle which has boiled over, the telephone which has just started to ring, your son who isn't doing his homework and whom you have to force to his books, your daughter

who doesn't want to go to bed, the thought that you've still got so much to do, and the time you have to get up in the morning. You experience all this while watching television. Consequently – and that's another mistake I made with *Dekalog* – stories on television have to be told more slowly, and the same thing has to be repeated several times, to give the viewer who's gone off to make a cup of tea or gone to the loo a chance to catch up with what's happening. If I were to make the films again today, I still probably wouldn't take this into account even though I consider it a mistake.

The best idea I had in *Dekalog* was that each of the ten films was made by a different lighting cameraman. I thought that these ten stories should be narrated in a slightly different way. It was fantastic. I gave a choice to the cameramen I'd worked with before, but for those whom I was working with for the first time, I sought out ideas, or films, which I believed would, in some way, suit and interest them and allow them to make best use of what they had: their skills, inventiveness, intelligence, and so on.

It was an amusing experience. Only one cameraman made two films; all the others were made by different lighting cameramen. The oldest cameraman must have been over sixty, and the youngest about twenty-eight – he'd just finished film school. So they came from different generations, had completely different experiences and approaches to the profession. Yet these films are, all in all, extremely similar visually, even though they are so different. In one the camera is hand-held, in another a tripod is used. One uses a moving camera while another uses a stationary one. One uses one kind of light, another uses something different. Yet despite everything, the films are similar. It seems to me that this is proof, or an indication, of the fact that there exists something like the spirit of a screenplay, and whatever resources a cameraman uses, if he's intelligent and talented, he will understand it, and this spirit will somehow get through to the film – however different the camerawork and lighting – and determine the essence of the film.

I've never given lighting cameramen as much freedom as I did in *Dekalog*. Each one could do as he pleased, albeit because my strength had run out. Besides, I counted on the competence, on the energy which results

from freedom. If you impose restrictions on someone, he won't have any energy. If you give him freedom, then he'll have energy because there'll be lots of different possibilities for him and he'll try to find the best. So I gave my lighting cameramen a tremendous amount of freedom. Each one could decide how and where he put the camera, how to use it, how to operate it. Of course, I could disagree but I accepted nearly all their ideas concerning operating, structure and staging. And despite this, the films are all similar. It's interesting.

I know a lot of actors in Poland but there are a lot I don't know and I met a great many of them for the first time when making *Dekalog*. Some actors I didn't know and I might as well go on not knowing them because they're not my actors. It often happens that you meet an actor whom you think is fantastic then, when you start working, it turns out that he simply doesn't understand, work, or think on the same wavelength as you. And, consequently, your work together simply becomes an exchange of information, an exchange of requests. I ask him to play like this or like that. He plays like this or slightly differently and not much comes of it. On the other hand, I met a lot of actors whom I didn't know before and I really ought to have known; experienced actors of the older generation and young actors whom I used for the first time.

The films kept overlapping because of the actors and because of various things to do with organisation and production. It was all carefully planned. People knew that if, on a particular day, we were going to be filming a corridor in a building which was going to be used in three films, then three cameramen would come along, light it and we'd do their three successive scenes. This was simply because it was easier to bring in three cameramen, and even change the lighting, rather than hire the same location three times, demolish everything three times and set it up again.

This is how we worked. The lighting cameraman would be informed ahead of time that he'd have to come on a certain day because a bit of his film was going to be shot, a bit of his scene in a given interior. So he'd come along. We often made breaks in the shoot. Why, for example, did we interrupt the filming of *Dekalog, Five*? We began it, shot half, and made a break. Stawek, the cameraman, was probably busy, working

on some other film. So we shot more or less half of it and then took a break of two or three months. Meanwhile we made two other *Dekalogs* and then returned to number five. Of course, it's more difficult in the West because the money involved belongs to somebody in particular: the money's not nobody's, that is, it's not State money as it was in Poland. So it is harder, but I do try this stratagem. *Dekalog* was a typical example of this. I could manoeuvre all the time. If something didn't seem right in the cutting-room, I'd simply shoot another scene. Or reshoot it. I'd change it. And I'd know why I was changing it and how. It was much easier.

In fact, I just keep shooting these tests all my life. Then suddenly the tests are finished and a film's got to be cut from them. I always work like this and always have done. It's difficult for me to write a film on paper the way it will look in the end. It never ends up looking like that. It always looks a bit different.

Dekalog took a year to shoot with a break of a month, so eleven months in all. I even went to Berlin during that time because I was giving seminars there. Sometimes I'd go on a Sunday or in the evening. I'd go in the evening, for example, and come back in the morning, to shoot.

I often used to catch flu or a cold or something but I don't get ill when I'm shooting. I don't know why. Energy accumulates, from some past time in your life and that's when you use it – because you're in dire need of it. I think it's like that in general. If you really need something, really want something, then you get it. It's the same with energy and health while filming. I can't remember ever being ill while shooting. My own energy kept me going, plus something like – for example in *Dekalog* – curiosity to know what was going to happen because a new lighting cameraman was coming the following day, with different actors and so on. What's going to happen? How's it going to turn out?

I was shattered by the end, of course. But I remembered everything accurately; how many takes I had, how many retakes of a particular take in film 4 or 7 or 3 or 2 or 1, right up until the very end of the edit. I didn't have any problems there.

There's this guy who wanders around in all the films. I don't know who he is; just a guy who comes and watches. He watches us, our lives. He's not very pleased with us. He comes, watches and walks on. He doesn't appear in number 7, because I didn't film him right and had to cut him out. And he doesn't appear in film 10 because, since there are jokes about trading a kidney, I thought that maybe it's not worth showing a guy like that. But I was probably wrong. No doubt I should have shown him in that one, too.

The guy didn't appear in the screenplays initially. We had a very clever literary manager, Witek Zalewski, at the time in whom I had and still have immense trust and, when we'd written the *Dekalog* screenplays, he kept saying to me, "I feel there's something missing here, Krzysztof. There's something missing." "But what, Witek? What do you feel is missing?" "I can't say, but there's something missing. Something's not there in the scripts." And we talked, talked, talked, talked and talked and in the end he told me this anecdote about a Polish writer called Wilhelm Mach. This Mach was at some screening. And Mach says, "I liked the film very much. I liked it and especially that scene at the cemetery." He says, "I really liked the guy in the black suit at the funeral." The director says, "I'm very sorry but there wasn't any guy in a black suit." Mach says, "How come? He stood on the left-hand side of the frame, in the foreground, in a black suit, white shirt and black tie. Then he walked across to the right-hand side of the frame and moved off." The director says, "There wasn't any guy like that." Mach says, "There was. I saw him. And that's what I liked most in the film." Ten days later he was dead. So Witek Zalewski told me this anecdote, this incident, and I understood what he felt was missing. He missed this guy in a black suit whom not everyone sees and who the young director didn't know had appeared in the film. But some people saw him, this guy who looks on. He doesn't have any influence on what's happening, but he is a sort of sign or warning to those whom he watches, if they notice him. And I understood, then, that that's what Witek felt was missing in the films so I introduced the character whom some called 'the angel' and whom the taxi-drivers when they brought him to the set called 'the devil'. But in the screenplays he was always described as 'young man'.

The Polish ratings for *Dekalog* were good, or rather, the so-called ratings. They're counted in percentages by a special office. It started with 52 per cent for film 1 and went up to 64 per cent for film 10. That means about 15 million viewers, which is a lot. The critics weren't bad this time. They had a few digs at me but rarely below the belt. ●



OTHER TELEVISION WORKS

In total, Kieślowski made eight films for Polish Television between 1972 and 1981. Three of them (*Checking the King / Szach królowi*, 1972; *Two for the Seesaw / Pozwolenie na odstrzał*, 1976; *The Card Index / Kartoteka*, 1979) were studio recreations of already extant stage plays: in other words, they're not considered true 'Kieślowski' productions, and he seems to have had nothing to say about them. The other five were developed by Kieślowski himself, and deal with similar themes to those that he was exploring in his concurrent cinema features and documentaries. Furthermore, *Personnel* may be the most directly autobiographical piece that he ever made, inspired as it was by his backstage career prior to his enrolment at the Łódź Film School. And, just as would happen with his more controversial cinema features such as *Blind Chance* (1981) and *No End* (1984), two of his television productions had to wait several years for their first public screening – four in the case of *The Calm*, and fifteen in the case of *Short Working Day*, although Kieślowski's personal antipathy towards the latter was also a significant factor in its long suppression.



Pedestrian Subway

Przejście podziemne

CAST

Teresa Krzyżanowska as Lena

Andrzej Seweryn as Michał

Anna Jaraczówna as the toilet attendant

Zygmunt Maciejewski as the educator

Jan Orsza-Lukaszewicz as the beaten man

Janusz Skalski as the decorator

Marcel Łoziński as the Frenchman in search of directions

Wojciech Wiszniewski as the man watching the decorating

CREW

Directed by **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Written by **Ireneusz Iredyński** and **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Cinematography by **Sławomir Idziak**

Production Design by **Teresa Barska**

Art Direction by **Teresa Gałkowska**

Costumes by **Ewa Braun**

Make-up by **Romualda Baszkiewicz**

Sound by **Małgorzata Jaworska**

Edited by **Elżbieta Kurkowska**

Produced for the **Tor Film Studio**

Filmed in 1973, first broadcast on 13 January 1974

Krzysztof Kieślowski on *Pedestrian Subway*

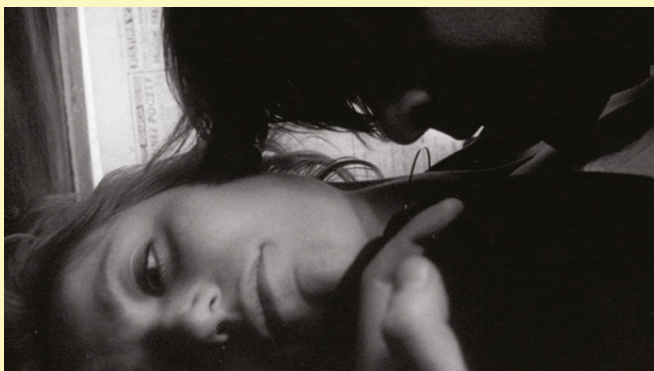
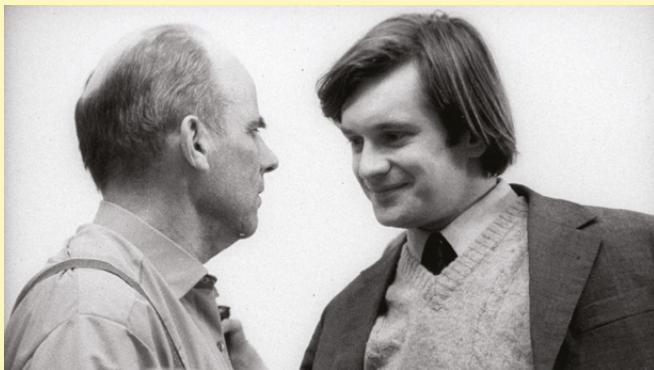
I followed the most usual path in Poland – a compulsory one – when I made my first feature, a half-hour television film. Various friends of mine avoided taking this path but I didn't. I wanted to take it because I didn't think I knew how to make full features. There was a rule that if you wanted to make feature films you had to make a half-hour film for television, then an hour film for television and only then a full feature. I

knew something about documentaries but I didn't know anything about working with actors or staging. So I willingly made shorter films in order to learn.

That first film I made was called *Pedestrian Subway*. I shot it with Sławek Idziak. The entire film takes place during one night in a pedestrian subway which had just been opened in the centre of Warsaw at the crossroads of Jerozolimskie and Marszałkowska Avenues. It was a fashionable place. There are ghastly Russian traders there now but it used to be an elegant place at one time. That was the beginning of the 1970s, in 1972. And that's where the action was located.

I wrote the script with Irek Iredyński. That really was the only script I ever wrote with a professional writer. (Later I wrote another with Hania Krall, but that was different because the script for *Short Working Day* was based on one of Hania's reports, whereas in *Pedestrian Subway* the idea that the action should take place underground was mine.) I took my idea to Irek and together we wrote the script. It was tough going because I had to arrange to meet him at six or even five o'clock in the morning since that was the only time he was sober. He'd take out a frosted bottle of vodka from the freezer. And we'd start to drink and write; we'd manage to write two, three, four or five pages before we got drunk. It wasn't a very long script. It was about thirty pages all in all so we probably met about ten times. And each time it was the same: at the break of day, a bottle of vodka from the freezer. Vodka, frozen and oily. Six o'clock in the morning and we'd knock it back. Knock it back. Knock it back. Knock it back. Knock it back. Until we were blind drunk. At least I was. I'd pick up what we'd managed to put together and go home.

Then I shot the film. We had ten nights; I shot the whole film in nine and on the ninth night I realised that I was shooting something idiotic, some nonsense which didn't mean anything to me. The plot didn't mean much to me. We would put the camera somewhere. The actors said some lines. And I had the impression that we were making a complete lie. And on the last night I decided to change it all. I only had one night left. I couldn't go over the allocated number of shooting days because they were strictly limited. In full features you have fifty days and can



always do some manoeuvring. In a short television film like this, you have ten or twelve. You don't get any more – that's what professionalism is all about, among other things. Anyway, I had one night left and I decided on that night that we'd shoot the whole film from the beginning. And we did, using a documentary camera. We stopped only to reload the camera because I think we had 120-metre magazines, meaning we had to change the magazine every four minutes. It was a small camera which you could carry on your shoulders. The Arriflex BL2 or 3 hadn't been invented yet. We had to use it without sound, so we recorded the dialogue later. The actors knew the script very well. After all, we had been shooting the situations for the past nine nights. We still had enough film stock left. I bought a bit of stock myself from some assistant. Then I edited the film, using about twenty percent, if not more, from that documentary night.

In fact, I improvised. I said to them, "Listen, this is the situation. You're a shop decorator." Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska played the woman and Andrzej Seweryn played her husband, who had come to Warsaw. She had left some small town where they used to be teachers, and was now a shop decorator. He'd come to Warsaw to look for her since he still loved her, and he tried to persuade her to come back to him. I can't remember any more of the script. They talk about something. Something happens. Someone comes to the night shop – the shop she's decorating at night. Someone wants something. Something takes place outside the shop window. All sorts of things happen. I said to them, "Listen, act it all out. Do it all the way you feel best. And I'll shoot it."

I think that thanks to this rather desperate operation, the film took on a life of its own and became much more authentic. This was terribly important to me at the time, and still is, in fact - to make films authentic in reactions, and details.

It was my first experience with professional actors, apart from film school. I'd done some theatre for television but this was my first real feature film. ●



First Love

Pierwsza miłość

CREW

Written and directed by **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Cinematography by **Jacek Petrycki**

Assistant director **Krzysztof Wierzbicki**

Music arrangement **Małgorzata Jaworska**

Sound **Michał Żarnecki**

Edited by **Lidia Zonn**

Head of Production **Włoda Dąbrowska**

Produced by the **Documentary Film Studio (Warsaw)**
for **Telewizja Polska**

Filmed in 1974

Krzysztof Kieślowski

on *First Love*

When I was finishing film school I wrote a thesis called 'Reality and the Documentary Film' where I put forward the argument that in everybody's life there are stories and plots. So why invent plots if they exist in real life? You only have to film them. That's the subject I invented for myself. Then I tried to make films like that but I didn't make any – except for *First Love*. I don't think it's a bad film.

I had always wanted to make a film about a guy who wins a million zlotys on the pools. That was a lot of money in Poland in the 1970s. A large villa cost something like 500,000 zlotys; a car cost 50,000 or even 70,000. Anyway, it was a huge sum of money, and very few people in Poland had so much. So I wanted to make a film about a guy who wins a million and observe him right up until the moment the money disappears; you could describe it as butter on a frying pan. You put a bit of butter on a frying pan and it melts, disappears.

Another idea which I had was the one I used in *First Love*. It's the other side of the coin – it's the idea of rising dough. You put dough into an oven and it rises of its own accord even though you're not doing anything to it any more. In this case it was the idea of a woman's belly, which at a certain moment gets impregnated and we watch it grow.

We spent a long time with the couple – Jadzia and Romek. A year, because we met them when Jadzia was four months pregnant, and we stayed with them until the child was two months old. So that was almost a year.

There was masses of manipulation in this film, or even provocation, but you can't make a film like that any other way. There's no way you can keep a crew at somebody's side for twenty-four hours a day. No way. I say we took eight months to make it but I think there were no more than thirty or forty shooting days. So during those thirty or forty days I had to manipulate the couple into situations in which they'd find

themselves anyway, although not exactly on the same day or at the same time. I don't think I ever put them in a situation in which they wouldn't have found themselves if the camera hadn't been there. For example, they wanted a place to live. They went to the housing co-op, so obviously I had to go there earlier with the camera. But it was their housing co-op. They were trying to get their own apartment and not some fictitious one, and I didn't write dialogue for them.

I wanted them to read a book called something like *Young Mother or The Developing Foetus*. So I bought them the book and then waited for them to read and discuss it. These situations were clearly manipulated. They had a tiny room at their grandmother's and they decided they wanted to paint it violet. Right, let them paint it violet. I came to film them while they were painting and – this is clear provocation – I sent in a policeman, who arrived and complained that they weren't registered, that they were living there illegally and could be thrown out. I deliberately found a policeman whom I thought wouldn't cause much harm, although Jadzia was in her eighth month by then and the whole thing could have been quite risky – an unexpected visit like that could have induced labour. Everybody was frightened of the police in Poland at the time, especially if they weren't registered where they were living. It wasn't as easy as it is today.

There were a lot of situations like that but there were also some which resulted from life itself. Like the wedding, for example – we were there with the camera. The birth was the actual birth – we were there with the camera.

A birth, as we all know, takes place only once. For the next one, you have to wait at least a year. So we got ready for it very carefully. We knew Jadzia would give birth at the hospital on Madalińskiego Street, where my daughter was also born. I can't quite remember whether this little one was born before or after Marta but it was more or less during the same period. I used to stand outside the same window to see Maryska, my wife, and I can't remember whether I went to the window and had the feeling of *déjà vu* because Romek had stood there before, or the other way around. I think Marta is a little older and I used to go there and then when Romek stood outside the same window, in the

same yard, to see Jadzia, I had the feeling of *déjà vu*, that something was happening for the second time.

Here's a story of how you can organise yourself for a documentary film and how, despite all the good will and forward planning in the world, you can still lose. Of course, we knew in what room Jadzia would be giving birth. We set up the lights ahead of time, a week before she was due to give birth. The microphones were also set up. Misio Zarnecki was the sound recordist but Małgosia Jaworska recorded sound for that scene so there was a woman present, not a man. As many men were eliminated from the crew as possible. There weren't any electricians because the lights had already been set up and Jacek Petrycki, who was cameraman, had a little chart showing him where the lights were so he could turn them on himself.

Jadzia and Romek didn't have a telephone and we worked it out that the moment Jadzia went into labour, Romek would phone 'Dziob'. Dziob had a telephone and so did everybody who was to be there in the labour room. The rule was that at any one time somebody had to be at home, so if, for example, Jacek, the cameraman, had to go out for a while Grażyna, his wife, would know where he was so that she could get in touch with him and he could rush off to the labour room. We all knew it was a question of two hours and that was it. Or even half an hour. We couldn't be late. We'd already worked on the film for five or six months before the birth so it was obvious we couldn't lose this scene. So Dziob was to phone me, Jacek, Małgosia Jaworska and the production manager. We didn't need anybody else there.

We waited. We waited a week. No news. Every day I sent Dziob off to check if by any chance Romek hadn't forgotten to phone. Then one night, Dziob, who liked to have a drink, couldn't hold out any more and went drinking. He decided he couldn't hang around by the telephone for twenty-four hours a day any more. Off he went and got drunk, Lord knows who with. He didn't know where he went himself. And at four in the morning he landed up on a night bus going from Ochota to Śródmieście. He was completely drunk. The night bus in Warsaw goes once every two hours if you're lucky. So Dziob gets on the bus and falls asleep, of course. Sits on the back seat, rests his head on his knees or

arms and falls asleep. And makes his way along in this bus. It's four in the morning. Night. It was winter, I think. No, it was already spring but it was cold that night. Suddenly he feels somebody shake him by the shoulders. He wakes up. It's Romek who'd got on the same bus with Jadzia. She had gone into labour that very night. They hadn't been able to find a taxi. They'd phoned Dziob but there was nobody there, of course, because Dziob was already lying drunk on the bus. They'd got on the bus and the only person they saw was Dziob, blind drunk, who immediately sobered up. He jumped off the bus, rushed to a telephone box and phoned me, Jacek and Małgosia. Half an hour later we were all there in the hospital and managed to film the whole birth which, in the end, lasted eight hours so there hadn't been any problem really. But no one was to know. It's like that sometimes. A random incident – like, for example, a drunk Dziob – could have prevented us from filming what we needed.

I still keep in touch with Jadzia and Romek. They lived in Germany for a few years and now live in Canada. They've got three children. I met them not long ago. There was a retrospective of my films in Germany and I persuaded the organisers to show *First Love*. And since I knew that Jadzia and Romek were living in Germany at the time, I persuaded the organisers to invite the whole family to the screening. They all came. The little girl, whose birth we'd filmed, was already eighteen. Of course, everybody was in tears.

Nothing bad came of all this although I was afraid it might. I was afraid it might go to their heads. I was afraid they'd start thinking they were great stars. But then I realised this wouldn't happen. That's one of the reasons I chose that particular couple. I'd noticed that Jadzia, although she was only seventeen, knew exactly what she wanted and was clearly out to get it. And what she wanted was simply to have a child, get married, be a good wife, be a decent woman and have a bit of money. That was her goal, and she managed to get it all, of course. I knew she wouldn't have any pretensions which would change her attitude to life, make her think, for example, that she could be an actress, that she could perform. She knew perfectly well that that wasn't her world, and it didn't interest her in the least.

The film definitely didn't change them. They met with some very good reactions a week or two after it was shown on television. People recognised them in the streets and said hello or simply smiled at them. And that was nice. This only lasted for a short while. Everybody forgot about them afterwards, of course. Other films were shown on television, and other people were recognised in the streets. Other people were smiled at or pointed out. But they had that brief moment when people were friendly to them.

I think that something positive came out of this film. You had to wait years for a flat in Poland in those days – and you still do, in fact, up to fifteen years. They were waiting, too, because they'd only just got married. Romek was already registered at the housing co-op and had been waiting for two or three years. There's this scene in the film where they go to the co-op and ask when they can expect to get a flat and are told that maybe in five years' time there might be a chance for them to go on a list which one day might have results. So there was absolutely no prospect of a flat in the foreseeable future. They had that tiny room at their grandmother's which they'd painted violet and where they couldn't really live with a child. They couldn't move either to his parents or to hers. Their parents' flats were too small and conditions were a bit too complicated for them to move in there, particularly with a little child.

Then I came up with this very simple idea. I wrote a short treatment called *Ewa Ewunia*. This was after their baby was born, when we already knew that she was a girl and that she'd be called Ewka. So this was called *Ewa Ewunia* and the idea was that I'd make another film which would start the day Ewa was born and carry on to the day she gave birth to a child of her own.

I wrote the proposal and submitted it. Since *First Love* was an hour-long film made on 16mm for Polish Television, I also submitted this proposal to them. Television was – and still is – very powerful in Poland. They said it was great. This really was a long-term and pretty impressive project. It is impressive to make a film about one person over twenty years and I wanted to make it. I even started on it. There must be some footage in the archives of when the little girl was five or six.

So, I went to the Television head, who liked the idea, and I said, "Right, but do you want this film to be optimistic?" He replied, "Of course we want it to be optimistic" I remember this conversation very well. I said, "If you want this film to be optimistic, then we have to create optimistic facts since the facts, as they are, are pessimistic" "What facts?" "They simply don't have anywhere to live," I said. "And if we make a film where Ewa's born in some sort of hovel and is brought up in some horrific backyard, amongst other dirty, poor, neglected children, we won't have an optimistic film. We have to create an optimistic situation." "So what would this optimistic situation be?" "We have to find a place for them to live." With the help of its influence in various places – the Party, the council or whatever, I don't care where – Television found a flat for them. Suffice it to say that when the little girl was a half a year old, they already had a flat. A large, decent, four-roomed flat.

They lived there for a while and I shot some footage for *Ewa Ewunia* there. And then I stopped because first of all, I'm not sure I'd have stuck it out. Maybe I would have done, if I filmed every two years or so. We wouldn't have had to film continuously. But something else happened. I just realised that I couldn't carry on filming this because if I did I might land up in a similar mess to the one I almost landed in later, in 1981, when filming *Station (Dworzec)*. That is, I might film something which could be used against them, for example. And I didn't want that. So I stopped.

In my opinion, documentary films shouldn't be used to influence the subject's life either for the better or for the worse. They shouldn't have any influence at all. Especially in the realm of opinions, of one's attitude to life. And you have to be very careful there; it's one of the traps of documentary films. To a large extent, I've managed to avoid that quite well. I've neither crushed nor lifted up any of the subjects of my documentaries – and there have been quite a few. ●



Personnel

Personel

CAST

Juliusz Machulski as Romek Januchta

Irena Lorentowicz as the set designer

Włodzimierz Boruński as the technical manager

Michał Tarkowski as Sowa the tailor

Andrzej Siedlecki as himself

Tomasz Lengren as Roman's template puncher

Tomasz Zygadło as the youth organisation chairman

Janusz Skalski as the head dressmaker

Krystyna Wachelko as the girl on the train

Ludwik Mika as the theatre director

Wilhelm Kłonowski, **Jan Torończak**, **Jan Zieliński** and **Edward Ciosek** as the tailors

Henryk Sawicki as the ballet master

Waldemar Karst as the dancer

Krzysztof Sitarski as the singer

Helena Kowalczykowa as Romek's aunt

CREW

Written and directed by **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Cinematography by **Witold Stok**

Production Design by **Tadeusz Kosarewicz**

Costumes by **Izabella Konarzewska**

Make-up by **Zbigniew Dobracki**

Sound by **Michał Żarnecki**

Edited by **Lidia Zonn**

Head of Production **Zbigniew Stanek**

Produced for the **Tor Film Unit**

Filmed in 1975, first broadcast on 13 January 1976

Krzysztof Kieślowski on *Personnel*

Personnel, my first longer film, was nearly one and a half hours long and made for television. It was that one-hour television film I was talking about, but it grew in length a bit. But with that, too, we'd already started shooting when I suddenly realised that I was shooting something absurd: inauthentic from start to finish. I phoned the then head of the production house, Staś Rożewicz, and said that I thought the whole thing was useless. He asked us to send him the footage we had already shot. We

did. There was a break in production. After a few days, I phoned again and said I still thought the same as before. Actually, I thought I was going up some dead-end street and that production should be stopped while there was still time. Only a relatively small amount of money would have been lost at that stage. He replied, "Then stop if you don't like it." He behaved very wisely, of course, just like my father had done once when he'd sent me to the Firemen's College: "You want to go to work? Fine, finish the Firemen's College. You'll be a fireman and working." Staś Rożewicz said: "You want to stop? Then stop if you don't like it. That's fine. We've looked at the footage. I don't think it's all that bad, but if you want to stop, then stop tomorrow. Go back to Warsaw." We were shooting in Wrocław. But it's precisely because he said what he did instead of cheering me up by saying it's not all that bad, that my ambition didn't allow me to stop. On the contrary. I resolved to finish the film.

I've managed to work like this many times. That's one of the reasons why I used to work on two films at the same time. So as to have the possibility of playing around with time, actors, money and so on.

The script of *Personnel* was more or less like the finished film, plus all sorts of things which happened on the way, of course. The action was very loose, very free. That is, it was very delicate and extremely enigmatic. A young man comes to the opera to work as a tailor. And suddenly he sees that his idea of the theatre, or art, is pretty naive. Confronted with artists and people who run the theatre, his dreams are a mere illusion. In the presence of artists, singers, dancers and so on, he is pretty helpless. This world which had seemed to be so beautiful to him doesn't exist. People just sing their pieces to get them over with; they just dance to get it over with. There are constant quarrels, haggling, conflicting ambitions, shouting. Art, in fact, just dissolves away somewhere. You can retrieve it when you come to the theatre in the evening. Everything goes quiet, the curtain rises, and you experience something. But if you take part in it behind the scenes, then you see what sort of people, what trivial matters you've got to deal with and how uselessly it's all run.

Theatre and opera are always a metaphor for life. It's obvious that the film was about how we can't really find a place for ourselves in Poland.



That our dreams and ideas about some ideal reality always clash somewhere along the line with something that's incomparably shallower and more wretched. And I think that that's the way this film works, more or less. The script was an outline of the action and it opened up possibilities for scenes which were improvised. We improvised for a very simple reason, and I made that film for one reason. Well, for several really – you can always find several reasons if you want to.

But first of all I wanted to find a way to pay back my debt to the College for Theatre Technicians, because I got to work a bit in the theatre – for a year or so. Some time after that, as I've said, I was a dresser at the Contemporary Theatre (Teatr Współczesny). It was a good theatre then; the best in Warsaw at the time. I was constantly dealing with brilliant actors who now appear in my films. We still like each other very much but the relationship is entirely different. The actors include Zbyszek Zapasiewicz, Tadeusz Łomnicki, Bardini, Dziewoński – many people who are now in my films. I used to hand them their trousers, wash their socks and so on. I used to attend to them behind the scenes and watch the performances – forever in the wings – because a dresser's got to work before the performance, after the performance and during the intervals, but during the actual performance he's virtually free. He can fold napkins and tidy things up but he can also go to the wings and watch the performance.

One of my teachers from the theatre college appeared in the film, too. She was probably the best teacher I ever had – Irena Lorentowicz, daughter of the great Polish painter, Jan Lorentowicz. She was an outstanding pre-war stage designer and taught me technical theatre skills. She was the stage designer in *Personnel*. She went to America during the war and lived there until about 1956 or 1957 and then returned to Poland. She did stage design for the Warsaw Opera and taught technical theatre skills at my college. Those were the debts I was paying off in *Personnel*: to various people, institutions, emotions that I used to have, discoveries which someone had led me to.

The second reason why I made the film was the feeling that when I made documentaries which were short and compact, I'd always have an enormous amount of material which I liked a lot but which I had to

throw out. This material was only interesting when it was on screen for quite a long time; gossip, for example, and various observations about people's behaviour. When people started talking about this and that in a way which was amusing and moving, the documentary would grind to a halt, because the idea behind it had stopped unfolding. And then I thought that I'd use this sort of material in *Personnel* as a dramatic device. Consequently, there are a lot of scenes there, ten or more, which basically consist of expressing atmosphere, and showing people's various absurdities – in the good sense of the word.

I brought in my main character, played by Julek Machulski. I brought in Tomasz Lengren who was a film director, and Tomek Zygałło, another film director; and Mieczysław Kobek, another film director, who played the manager of the workshop. But the rest of the tailors were real tailors at the Wrocław Opera. They just carried on making costumes while we moved around among them. When it came to the improvised scenes, I simply gave them some topic for the sort of conversation which always takes place in theatres and places like that. People are always sitting around and talking about something or other; about what's happened, about their dreams, what they're doing, who's been unfaithful to whom. They gossip. And it's this atmosphere that I wanted to film.

So, in these scenes, my people didn't have much to do, because what I really wanted to photograph were the reactions of people who really were tailors and really were sewing. And everybody who worked in that theatre stayed in their places. We photographed them all the time, and against this background I shot the minuscule action of the disillusionment suffered by the boy who comes to work in the theatre with such high hopes. I knew my director colleagues much better than I knew any actors. Also, the effect was more authentic when I had real tailors, a director and a stage designer interacting with non-actors than it would have been had they been playing alongside actors, because actors are always playing a role whereas non-actors aren't. My film directors simply tried to enter the characters and then just be them.

Various little things turned up which testify to our schematic way of thinking. For example, we think that a tailor has always got a tape-measure around his neck. And what do we see on the screen? Sure,

we see men with tape-measures around their necks, but they're only the people I brought in. Real tailors don't wear tape-measures around their necks. The real tailors really are sewing whereas my ones are only pretending. A non-actor and a film director playing somebody else is a better combination than a non-actor and an actor playing somebody else. I think that a director can enter into the spirit of the situation of those around him better and can adapt to the prevailing atmosphere. And that's how it was.

There's one man there who's an actor; he plays the singer and he's terrible. It was all right for this part but imagine what would have happened if I'd taken actors like him to play the tailors. Not only would you have tape-measures around their necks all the time but you'd also have a clash of inauthenticity in the manner of speech and thought because an actor like that would naturally want to stand out. The film directors didn't because they understood perfectly well that I didn't want them to stand out. Quite the opposite. The point was to have them stay in the background. And that's what we managed to achieve. ●



The Calm

Spokój

CAST

Jerzy Stuhr as Antoni Gralak

Izabela Olszewska as Jedynakowa, his landlady

Jerzy Trela as Zenek, construction manager

Michał Sulkiewicz as Mietek

Danuta Ruksza as Bożena, Antoni's wife

CREW

Written and directed by **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Cinematography by **Jacek Petrycki**

Production Design by **Andrzej Rafał Waltenberger**

Art Direction by **Michał Sulkiewicz**

Costumes by **Renata Własow**, **Ewa Parys-Płowik**

Music by **Piotr Figiel**

Sound by **Wiesław Jurgala**

Editing by **Maria Szymańska**

Make-up by **Edward Kubacki**

Produced by **Jeremi Maruszewski**

For **Centralna Wytwórnia Programów i Filmów Telewizyjnych Półtel**

Produced in 1976, first broadcast on 19 September 1980

Krzysztof Kieślowski on *The Calm*

The Calm was made for television. It was based on a short story but I can't remember the author's name. It was about a man who's released from prison but I can't remember what happened in the story. Anyway, the script was obviously very different.

I chose that story because there was a character in it whom I immediately knew how to adapt to fit Jurek Stuhr, whom I'd met while working on *The Scar*. I thought I had to write a film for him because he's so good. I absolutely had to make a film specially for him, so *The Calm* was made essentially for Jurek Stuhr. It's the best possible situation you can imagine.

The Calm hasn't got anything to do with politics. It simply tells the story of a man who wants very little and can't get it. He can't even get that much. The fact that a strike's depicted somewhere along the line is, of course, the reason why the film wasn't shown in Poland for some six or seven years. This was the first time that the existence of something like a strike was shown on screen in Poland, and it's probably the first time this was shown in a feature film. But it's not the story of a strike by any means. The strike's got nothing to do with it. It's a film about our country, about our system where you can't get what you want, even if all you want is a television and a wife. And he didn't want anything else – that lad didn't want anything else.

The main character's a guy who's just released from jail. A free man, he works on a small building site. Prisoners are brought in to help. Television had reservations about this scene. The Vice-President of Television was a very intelligent and shrewd man. He sent for me. I knew why. As I was approaching the Television centre, I noticed prisoners – dressed in prisoners' uniform, surrounded by guards watching over them with rifles – working on the tramlines. I went into the Vice-President's office. He said that he liked *The Calm* a lot and gave me a very astute criticism of the film. He really had understood everything. He really did like the film. I was pleasantly flattered and waited for the next bit – I knew I hadn't been called in to listen to compliments. I was right. The Vice-President was sorry to inform me that he must insist that some scenes be removed from the film. He didn't think it would be detrimental to the film. On the contrary, the film would be more succinct. Among the scenes he wanted removed, he mentioned the one with prisoners on the building site. "Because in Poland," said the Vice-President, "prisoners don't work outside prisons. The convention forbids it..." Here he gave the name of the international convention. I asked him to come up to the window. He did. I asked him what he saw. "Tramlines," he said. "And on the tramlines? Who's working there?" He looked carefully. "Prisoners," he said calmly. "They're here every day." "In that case, prisoners do work outside prison in Poland," I remarked. "Of course," he said. "That's exactly why you have to cut that scene out."

That's more or less what those conversations sounded like. That no one was quite pleasant. I cut out the scene with the prisoners plus a few others but the film still wasn't shown for a few years. When it was finally shown, it was a period piece. Things change quickly in Poland.

Fourteen years have passed since my conversation with the Vice-President. The other day, I was passing through a small town. I slowed down because of road works. As if from a bad script, the workers were dressed in prisoners' uniform. Guards with rifles stood next to them. Today I'm allowed to make a film about that. ●



Short Working Day

Krótki dzień pracy

CAST

Wacław Ulewicz as the party secretary

Lech Grzmociński as the police commander

Tadeusz Bartosik as the member of the party executive

Elżbieta Kijowska as Bogusia the secretary

Marek Kępiński as the party official

Paweł Nowisz as Henio the driver

Barbara Dziekan as the slogan dauber's wife

Wojciech Pilarski as the judge

and

Marian Gańcza

Jan Konieczny

Tadeusz Płuciennik

Zbigniew Bielski

Mirosław Siedler

Leon Charewicz

Janusz Dziubiński

Anna Grzeszczak

Eugeniusz Korczarowski

Tadeusz Mazowiecki

Marek Nowakowski

Stefan Paska

Remigiusz Rogacki

Michał Szewczyk

Eugeniusz Wałaszek

CREW

Directed by **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Written by **Hanna Krall** and **Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Cinematography by **Krzysztof Pakulski**

Production Design by **Andrzej Rafał Waltenberger**

Art Direction by **Borzysława Chmielewska**

Costumes by **Agnieszka Domaniecka**

Music by **Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz**

Sound by **Michał Żarnecki**

Edited by **Elżbieta Kurkowska**

Make-up by **Teodor Grymaszewski**

Produced by **Jacek Szeligowski** for the **Tor Film Unit**

Produced in 1981, first broadcast on 27 June 1996

Krzysztof Kieślowski on *Short Working Day*

I once wrote a script for one of my films with Hania Krall, a great friend of mine. It was a film based on one of her reports called 'Short Working Day' ('Krotki Dzień Pracy'). A terrible film. I made a complete hash of it but it was great writing it together. It's what you could call a typically political film: a film of its moment, which, had it been shown at the time, might perhaps have had some significance, but not necessarily. Reality changes and people don't care about it any more. They forget it ever existed. They don't remember what it was like. They don't remember why it was so painful. Rather than that, they try to remember all that was pleasant in that reality. That's probably why in all the Communist countries, there's this unexpressed – and probably nobody will express it – nostalgia for past times, although they were terrible. People are always joking: "Commune, come back. Commune, come back", in Poland, in Bulgaria, in Russia, everywhere. People remember only the good things. Choices were pretty simple. You knew who was on your side and who was your enemy. You knew you could blame somebody and somebody was guilty – and he really was guilty. The system and those who worked for it were guilty of something, that's for sure. It was easy to blame them. They had their own membership cards, their own badges, their own tie colours, and it was all terribly straightforward. Now that's disappeared. Everything's become very

complicated. To this is added nostalgia for times when we were younger, more energetic and had more hope. And that's how it is. Exactly the same goes for subject matter.

Short Working Day is a feature film for television, shot on 35mm because they'd also planned to show it in cinemas. It's not been shown to this day – fortunately. First it was stopped by the censors. I managed to make *Blind Chance* and *Short Working Day* during a single production schedule and finished both of them in December 1981.

I suspect that the film didn't work because in the script we didn't try hard enough to understand the main character. It's a critical film about a Party Secretary, based on events in Poland. Rebellions and strikes had started up in 1976 because of price rises, and in a fairly large town 100 kilometres from Warsaw a large protest broke out. The protest ended up with people setting fire to the regional Party Committee headquarters, and the Secretary fled the building, at almost the last moment. He tried to stay right to the end but when the furniture started getting hot, the police, with help from their informers, somehow managed to get him out. Otherwise he'd probably have been lynched.

And I tried to make a film about this Party Secretary. The original report was called 'View from a First-Floor Window' ('Widok z okna na pierwszym piętrze') because his office was on the first floor. Then later, the film was called *Short Working Day* because that day he worked shorter hours than usual. He had to get out of the place at about two o'clock.

I had set myself a trap because in Poland at that time – and even more so now – there was absolutely no question of the public wanting to understand a Party Secretary. A Party Secretary had always been considered as somebody who belonged to the authorities; a moron usually. This particular Party Secretary wasn't too much of a moron and I was making a critical film about him. But I was in a trap created by ruthless public opinion. I didn't want to delve deeply into the Secretary's heart or soul, and I was a bit embarrassed to do so; a priest's or a young woman's maybe, but a Party Secretary's? No, that wouldn't have been nice. Consequently, like it or not, the character is a bit schematic. He couldn't be exploited in greater depth because of this political trap.

Nowadays, it would be completely impossible to make a film about a Party Secretary – in any depth.

Everybody from those Communist days is writing memoirs or giving interviews now, in Poland. There are books everywhere. Politicians, artists and television personalities are all writing about how wonderful they were. You just don't know who was bad any more. You can't find a single interview or read a single book where someone admits to any degree of guilt. Everybody's innocent. Politicians are innocent, artists are innocent. When you express yourself publicly at any rate, you're always in the right from your point of view. But it's a different matter altogether whether you can sit in front of a mirror or face yourself and admit the various mistakes you've made in your life. Yet I've never yet seen anybody write publicly that something was their fault, that they'd done something foolish or incompetent.

Various conversations appear in newspapers, books and on television with people who, you'd think, had been responsible for those forty years or at least a large number of those forty years of Communism. Nobody says "I'm guilty"; I was the reason that..."; "Thanks to my inefficiency, thanks to my foolishness, thanks to my incompetence, this and this happened." No, on the contrary. "Everybody says I saved this"; "Thanks to me, we managed..." As a result, nobody knows where the people are who were in any way guilty. Where are the people who say "Yes, it's me. I'm the one who caused some injustice, pain, poverty"? There aren't any people like that. Besides, that's why they write books, of course, to justify themselves. It would be interesting to know whether they write to justify themselves in the eyes of other people or in their own eyes. That's what has always really interested me. But we'll never find out. It's a fundamental question about evil. Where, in essence, does evil lie? Where is it if it's not in us? Because it isn't in us. Evil's in others. Always.

I'm not sure these people are lying. That's how it was, according to their point of view. Or perhaps they just think that that's how it was. Maybe their memory highlights only those fragments, actions and situations in which they tried, in some way, to be better or decent than others. And that's the problem of relativism. Do absolute criteria exist? That's

the question nowadays because everything's becoming so relative, isn't it?

Today, in the eyes of public opinion in Poland, all Party activists are simply a gang of thieves, swindlers, people with bad intentions. It wasn't like that. It's a fair opinion as regards some of them, of course, but not all. Like anybody else, the Communists are made up of intelligent and stupid people, lazy and hard-working people, people with good intentions and those with bad. Even among the Communists there were people who had good intentions. It's not true that they were all bad.

So it was impossible to make a film like that then and it's impossible now. And probably the fault of the film or my failure, to be more precise, lay in the fact that I didn't take the existence of such a trap fully into account. I made a film which isn't any good. It's boring, badly directed and badly acted.

I wanted to cast Filipski in the main role and the film would probably have been better but I was afraid of him. I was simply afraid of working with him. Filipski is an actor – he later became a director – who's very well known in Poland for his arrogance; insolent self-confidence, and feeling of superiority. He was very well known in Poland for his anti-Semitic proclamations, for his terrible relentlessness in this matter. He gave masses of anti-Semitic performances in the theatre then. But he was a very good actor, and a strong personality. And he should have played the Party Secretary. If I'd have cast him, the film would probably have been better because I'd have had to fight him all along. And I'd had to be afraid of him all the time because I was afraid of him as a man. He simply hated me. Just like he hated everybody else. I didn't like him either, I must say – as a man, of course, although there's no doubt that he was a brilliant actor.

The film was shelved by the censors in 1981. It was entirely out of the question to show something like that even on television. I can't remember if Television sorted out its debts with the Production House. It was a big financial problem for the Production House. But I think they sorted out the accounts.

I finished editing *Short Working Day* and *Blind Chance* just before the introduction of martial law in December 1981. A hard winter had already begun in November and a month or a month and a half before martial law, it started to be bloody cold. It was cold as hell in the cutting-room. I asked the man who represented the trade union Solidarity in our studio, in the Wytwornia, to see to the heating because I thought that was the trade union's role. If you're cold in a room because the radiators aren't working, then it's the trade union's job to get somebody to mend them or to get somebody to buy electric heaters and install them in the cutting-room because people are freezing twelve hours a day. But he told me that Solidarity had more important things on its mind. And that's when I realised that this wasn't the place for me.

This is quite apart from the fact that I have grave doubts as to whether a trade union is the best solution for artists. I don't think it is. I think that a trade union is an exceptionally bad solution for artists and for the whole industry which surrounds art and culture. It's a disastrous solution. It always ends up with cleaners running the library not librarians, because there are more of them. And it's not the directors or producers or cameramen who run film-making but technicians, electricians, drivers and so on. I think that a trade union is contrary to an artist's nature, his nature to create something original and unique which, in essence, is what art should be. It's contrary to that nature because the people who run trade unions aim at something completely the opposite, at constantly repeating the same things because that's easiest. The trade unionists are very nice people. I've got nothing against them. On the contrary, I love and respect all these people, but I don't see why they should rule me. I can't agree to it.

I realised that this was simply another lie and swindle. What does that mean, a swindle? That's the wrong word, of course. It's not a swindle. Of course there were masses of good intentions, that's obvious. But it makes me uneasy if you talk of a trade union (because Solidarity was a trade union) but, in fact, are aiming at something else. And this was pretty evident. Of course, they couldn't say at the time that they were aiming at something else because everything would have fallen apart. But I couldn't really see myself living the lie which lay at the root of all

this. I signed myself out very quickly after that. Then, because of martial law, I slept all the time. For about five months, half a year.

Right at the beginning of martial law I thought I was even prepared to resort to different measures. Not with the help of a camera but, for example, with a rifle, hand-grenade or something like that. But it turned out that nobody in Poland was prepared to do that. Nobody in Poland wanted to die. Nobody in Poland waits to die for the so-called rightful cause any more. This became clear more or less at the beginning of 1982.

I tried to be a taxi-driver because the only thing I can do apart from films is drive a car. But it turned out that I was too short-sighted, and that I hadn't held my driving licence for long enough. You had to have held it for twenty years or something. You couldn't work in my profession during martial law, and nobody counted on being able to work. But after some time, of course, we did start trying to do something.

Martial law was all so dramatic but it seems funny now. It was funny, in fact, but from the perspective of those times it looked dramatic. I thought it was something for which the people simply wouldn't ever forgive the authorities and that the people would do something about it. I immediately started signing petitions and letters in opposition to martial law. It was very hard for my wife to take because she thought that I was responsible for her, for our child. And she was right. But at the same time I thought I was responsible for something more. Well, that's precisely an example of a situation where you can't make the right choice. If you make the right choice from the social point of view, you make the wrong one from the point of view of the family. You always have to look for the lesser evil. The lesser evil consisted of my going to bed and sleeping, like a bear.

So they didn't want to show *Short Working Day* for a good few years. Now they very much want to show it. But I'm against it now. I censor it myself, as it were. I'm trying not to let them show it because I know how bad it is. There's another reason, too. Now, when Communism no longer formally exists, but the Communists are still installed everywhere and endless plans exist to move away from Communism and throw the

Communists out of the body politic, as far away as possible from positions of influence, it seems deeply distasteful to me to kick somebody who's not really there any more. It seems morally unpleasant. I simply wouldn't want to do it. Those are sufficient reasons to try and stop the film from being shown; but they still want to show it. They keep looking for proof of how bad the Communists were. And *Short Working Day*, of course, is proof of this. That's true. ●

About the Restorations

Dekalog was extensively restored by Telewizja Polska at 4K resolution.

Pedestrian Subway and *Short Working Day* have been restored to high definition by Telewizja Polska. *First Love*, *Personnel*, *The Calm* and the documentary *Still Alive* were provided as standard definition masters, and have been upscaled on the Blu-ray discs to facilitate sharper subtitles.

Dekalog and the five other television works by Krzysztof Kieślowski were originally composed for the squarish aspect ratio of pre-widescreen television sets. Parts 5 and 6 of *Dekalog* were broadcast slightly letterboxed, reflecting the wider aspect ratio of the cinema versions. These various framings have been respected here. Everything on these discs is also presented at what was then the European broadcasting framerate of 25 frames per second. Although parts 5 and 6 also exist in longer cinema versions that were screened at 24fps, a comparison of the pitch of the music in the television version with the recording on the soundtrack CD reveals that 25fps is the optimum framerate for the television version of those episodes as well. Because of the requirements of the Blu-ray technical specifications, the encodes have been carried out at 1080i, although this is merely a carrier for a fully progressive image.

Production Credits

Discs and Booklet Produced by Anthony Nield
Booklet Compiled and Edited by Michael Brooke
Executive Producer Francesco Simeoni
Production Assistant Liane Cunje
Technical Producer James White
QC Manager Nora Mehenni
Authoring David Mackenzie
Subtitling dayfornight* and IBF
Design Nick Wrigley / enthusiasm.org

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